

The Peril
OF THE
TIMES
Displayed.

OR

The Danger of Mens taking up
with a

Form of Godliness,
But Denying the Power of it.

Being

The Substance of several **SERMONS**
Preached :

By **SAMUEL WILLARD,**
Teacher of a Church in *Boston. N.E.*

Sumenda sunt amura Salubria. Aug.

Boston, Printed by *B. Green, & J. Allen.*
Sold by *Benjamin Eliot.* 1700.

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T O T H E

Reader.

THERE are Pretenders unto *Godliness*, whose *Religion* does chiefly consist in being of this or the other particular *Party* of men making a Profession of *Christianity*. If that is all their *Godliness*, supposing them to fall in with those that have most of Truth in their more peculiar *Perswasions*, they have only the *Form* without the *Power*. In our Nation, which has the Name of *Protestant* and *Reformed*, some are of the *Episcopal*, others for the *Presbyterian*, others for the *Congregational*, others for the *Antipædobaptists* Form. These differ not in the *Fundamental Articles* of Faith; and from thence it is, that there are amongst them,

4 To the READER.

all, some, with whom *Godliness* in the Truth and Power is to be found : and yet some under all these Denominations, who have only the *Form*. That the Churches in *New-England* which in their Primitive Constitution consisted of the *Good Old Puritan Nonconformists*, were famous for Religion in the Purity and Power of it, cannot be denied. Nevertheless, in our first and best Times, there were Tares and Chaff mixed with the Wheat. That there is now a great Decay amongst Professors of Religion in this Land (would to God it were not so amongst Professors of our way in the other *England* also) must likewise be confessed. There is in that *Practical and Judicial Discourse* emitted herewith, a faithful Testimony against those *Apostasies*, which do witness to our Faces that this Generation comes short of what their Predecessors sometimes were. The Reverend Author observeth, That, *As to many of the Rising Generation, there is a fondness after New Things, and that they are become Disputants for those Things, which their Fathers left a Pleasant Land for the Avoidance of. And that many stand off from Communi-*

To the READER.

Communion, because they would not be under Discipline: That there are some Intemperate Church Members, who spend their precious Time in frequenting Publick Houses, and keeping loose Company: That Professors are ready to comply with the vain Customs of the Times. These and many the like Passages the Reader will find in the following Sermons. It is therefore sadly evident, that Religion in the Power of it is decaying and dying. Alas! There are now crept into some of our Churches such Things, as the Discipline in the first Reformed Churches in France has condemned as Censurable Evils: and which the National Synod held at Dort in Holland, declares to be Levity unbecoming Christians, an Offence to the Godly, and that those who persist therein, after Admonitions, shall be excluded from Communion.

If these things be so, is not that which was once a Noble Vine and wholly a Right Seed, degenerating apace? There are some Churches in the World, that never had that Purity of Discipline amongst them, which the Churches in New-England have been advantaged with, who notwithstanding, of late years, are blessed

with a *Young Generation* abounding in those Duties, of Faith and Obedience, in which *Godliness in the Power of it*, does very much consist. I remember, that ten years ago, that Excellent Person, *Dr. Walker*, then Minister at *Aldermanbury* in *London*, assured me that in that Parish, there were a considerable Number of Young persons, who often met together to Pray and Confer about the things wherein their Souls were concerned, and that every month, in order to their more prepared Coming to the *Lord's Supper*, they spent a Day in Prayer together. When the Doctor told me this, I was surpris'd with astonishing joy, at the Hearing of it. But it is much more surpris'ing, that there is Printed the last year at *London*, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in that City, and of the Endeavours of the Reformation of Manners*, Published by Mr. *Josiah Woodward*, a worthy Conformist Minister, who says, that it is the practice of those Societies to partake of the Holy Supper of the Lord frequently, thereby to devote themselves afresh to their Good Master, and as a means of receiving Spi-
ritual

To the READER.

7

ritual Strength from Him; and that many of them have, by the Grace of God, attained to that Excellent Primitive Temper of frequent Communicating *without growing formal*. Moreover, he has these words, which I could not but set a special Remark upon. It is (saith my Author in p 61.) *required of such as joyn themselves to them, that they give the Society a solemn account of their sense of spiritual things with the real Motives, which lead them to this Undertaking, and what they seriously purpose as to their future Life. This is many times done in Writing; and I have perused some of their Papers, and have found them penned in such an honest affectionate and undisguised style, with such pious and sensible Expressions, and in so modest and humble a manner, that they would mightily affect any pious person to read them, and move him to break forth into pathetick praises to God, who has given such Grace to young men in so Degenerate an Age. Thus Mr. Woodward, a Divine of the Church of England. He further relates, that there are many Hundreds of Young men freely and solemnly engaging themselves to Live strictly, and as becomes our Holy Religion. Some of the*
Art.

Articles or Orders, which they consent unto, and promise to walk accordingly, are these following (vid. p. 121. and 130.) That the Members of this Society shall meet together, one Evening in the week, at a convenient place, in order to encourage each other in Practical Holiness, by discoursing on Spiritual Subjects, and Reading Gods Holy Word, and to Pray to Almighty God, and to Praise His Name together. That none shall be admitted into this Society, without giving notice thereof to the Stewards, who shall acquaint the whole Society therewith; and after due enquiring into their religious purposes and manner of Life, the Stewards may Admit them to Subscribe their Names, if the major part of the Society allow it, and not otherwise, and with the like joynt consent they may Exclude any Members proved guilty of any misbehaviour after due Admonition, unless he giveth sufficient Testimony of his Repentance and Amendment before the whole Society. It is recommended to every person concerned in this Society, to consider the many Inconveniences (and many times Sins) which attend Ale-houses and Games, and wholly decline them, and to shun all unnecessary Resort to such Houses and Taverns,

To the READER.

9

Taverns, and wholly to avoid leud Play-Houses. The Respective Members of this Society, shall heartily endeavour through Gods Grace, to be just in all their dealings, even to an Exemplary Strictness. To Pray many times every day, remembering our continual Dependance upon God, both for Temporal and Spiritual Things. To partake of the Lords Supper, at least once a month, if not prevented by a reasonable Impediment. To practise the profoundest meekness and humility. To watch against Censuring others. To accustom themselves to holy thoughts in all places. To shun all foreseen occasions of evil. To think often of the different Estates of the Glorified, and the Damned in the Unchangeable Eternity, to which we are hastening. To examine themselves every night, what good or evil, they have done in the day past. To keep a private Fast once a month, (especially near their approach to the Lords Table) if at their own Disposal. To shun Spiritual Pride, and the effects of it, as Railing, Anger, Peevishness, and Impatience of Contradiction. To pray for the whole Society, in their private Prayers. To read pious Books often, for their Edification, but especially the Holy Bible. These mentioned are some of the particulars.

particulars agreed unto by the Religious Societies now in London, with several other Articles, in which the Spirit of Godliness does appear, but for brevities sake I omit them. I have here recited not only the things, but the very words expressed by the aforesaid Mr. Woodward; whose Piety, notwithstanding his Conformity, has rendred him Lovely and Honourable in my Esteem; and I give him great Thanks for his Narrative, wherein the things, above mentioned are contained. The last Article these Societies consent unto, is, *That every Member of this Society shall (after mature deliberation and due Trial) subscribe his Name to these Orders; to express his Approbation of them, and his Resolution and Endeavour to Live up to them; in order to which he shall constantly keep a Copy of them by him.*

Now, wherein does that Account of the work of Grace, usually observed in the Churches of New England, at the Admission of Members into their Communion, or our Church-Covenant; yea, our Renewed Covenants, exceed what is beginning to be practised among the Godly Conformists in the Communion of the Church.

To the READER.

II

Church of England? These things are so affecting and encouraging, as that I could not but take this Opportunity to publish them. And although it is a sad and mournful thought, that Godliness in the Power of it, is languishing in *New England*, it is a joyful Meditation, that it seems to be reviving in *England*, which brings to mind the Poetical, (shall I say) or Prophetical Rapture of pious Mr. *Herbert*, many years since, who conjectured, that notwithstanding Religion was then going into *America*, it would like the Sun return from the West to the East again.

Concerning the Reverend Author of these *Sermons*, it is needless to say any thing. Many of those *Discourses*, which he has formerly written, discover him to be one of rare Accomplishments in respect of the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit of Christ richly adorning him. The Subject here treated on, is of the greatest Importance. It is *the Present Truth*, nor can any thing be more seasonable and proper to be insisted on, considering that not only the *Power* of Godliness, but something of the *Form* too, is in danger.

to be lost among us. The manner of delivering the Truth, is with such clearness and plainness, as that ordinary Capacities may understand, and be edified by what is here presented to them.

The good Lord grant, that it may prove effectual for the Awakening of these Churches, To Remember whence they are fallen, and to Repent, and do their first works, lest the Lord Jesus come quickly, and Remove the Candlestick out of his Place.

Increase Nather.

Boston, New England.
November, 1699.

THE



T H E

Peril of the Times

Displayed.

2 Tim. 4. 5.

Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof.

WE need not to look far back for the *Analysis* of our *Text*. Paul, in the beginning of this Chapter, gives warning to *Timothy* of a great *Apostasy* that should come in the latter days, in which there should be a general defection of Professors. By the *Last Days*.

Days, is in the Gospel intended, or in them is comprized, the whole time between *Christ's Ascension*. and the Great Day of *Judgment*. However, there are some earlier, and some later periods pointed to in this *Era*. This *Prediction* may comprize generally the whole time; and this signifying, *That the times of clear Gospel light, shall not be free from men of perverse minds, notwithstanding their making a profession of Christ*. There may also be aimed in these words, the giving us a Description of the *Apostasy of Antichrist*, of which there are warnings not a few offered in the *New Testament*; and indeed the Spirit of *Antichristianism* is here abundantly deciphered. But it is applicable to all times of defection among Professors of *Christianity*; and may have respect to the last and worst times, preceding the great *Reformation* which is expected, of which our Saviour, Luk. 18. 8. *When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find Faith on the Earth?* The word *Perilous* signifyeth, *hard, difficult, molestful*; and such times do expose men to danger, and are therefore *Perilous*. It intends, that it will be hard for a man to live like

Times Displayed.

15

like a true Christian, because he will expose himself thereby. Now the *Apostle* doth not only give warning in general of such times, but he proceeds to characterize them, by the *genius* and carriage of men in them: for, *they are the evil hearts and carriages of men that make the times evil.* There are a great many notes which the *Apostle* here layeth down, which I shall not particularly enquire into: but the words of our *Text* contain in them one of these, and the last mentioned, but not the least: to all of which he subjoyns in the latter end of this *verse* a direction to Christians how to carry it to such men, *viz. to withdraw from their Communion.* All the former that are mentioned, were open and flagitious Crimes that men fall into; but this directs us to a more covered wickedness, hiding it self under a pretence of Piety: of which sort of men there is the greatest peril of all.

In the words then we have the description of a *Church Hypocrite*, or of one that pretends to be *Religious*, but is indeed *impious.* If we take all these particular notes to go into the making
up

up of the character of one *Apostate*, we have a *monster* indeed ; but we may look upon them as distributive, and to be found, some in one, some in another, and all together making up of a general *Apostasy*. In the words then we may observe, these persons described in two parts, and these do contradict each the other : for it is of the nature of Hypocrisy, to pretend to one thing, and intend another ; to have the face one way, and the heart quite contrary.

1. We have their pretention and outward carriage ; *Having a form of Godliness* : What is intended by this, will be afterward considered. Only observe, that *Criticks* tell us, that the word *Form*, here used, doth not signifie the essential, but accidental form of a thing ; and hence some translate it, a *Species*, or *Shew*.

2. We have the reality of what they are, and may be discovered to be, *but denying the power of it*. The word, *deny*, properly signifyeth that which is verbal, but it is sometimes used for practising against a thing ; and so it is here to be understood ; and we are to observe,

Times Displayed.

17

observe, that the form and the power are here opposed : they have the one, and are without the other. The words may also be considered as meerly *negative*, viz. a form without the power ; and both of these respects will after be considered. Hence,

DOCTRINE.

The Times are very dangerous, when Professors generally take up with a Form of Godliness, and deny the Power of it.

There are two Propositions contained in the Doctrine, viz.

1. That sometimes the Professors of Religion do generally take up with a Form of Godliness, and deny the Power of it.

2. That these times are very dangerous :

These may be distinctly laid open.

PROPO.

PROPOSITION I.

That sometimes the Professors of Religion do generally take up with a Form of Godliness, and deny the Power of it. Our *Apostle* not only presumes that there may be such times, but giveth warning about it, and saith, *that such times shall come*, under the Gospel Dispensation.

There are two things that may be here enquired, *viz.*

1. When men may be charged with thus doing?

2. Whence it is that a people in general do come to do so?

1. When men may be charged with thus doing?

A. That we may rightly take this up, we must ask,

1. What it is to have a Form of Godliness?

2. What it is to deny the power of it?

1. What it is to have a Form of Godliness?

A. The

A. The word *Godliness*, here used, signifieth *Right Worship*, and is in the strict sense, restrained to the Duties of the *First Table*, which refer to the Worship of God, both *Natural*, and *Instituted*; both the *manner*, and special *times* of it. But it is frequently used *Synechdochrically*, for all *Religion*, and comprizeth under it all the Duties required in the Gospel, both *towards God*, and *towards man*, considered as done in Obedience to the Command or revealed Will of God: and we may here take it in the most comprehensive sense. And we before observed, that the word *Form* intends not that which is *Essential*, but *Accidental*; and indeed, where there is the *Essential Form*, it includes the power in it: for, the essential form of it, is the Sanctification of the Spirit, whereby *the Law of God is written in our hearts*, and this will appear in our lives, for the operations of things are according to their essential forms. But there are two other senses of the word, as it is used in the *Greek Language*, which may both come under our present consideration, as being separable from the *Power*.

I. The

1. The word is sometimes used for the Rule which a man professeth himself to be under the obligation of, and pretends to follow in his actions. Hence we read of a *form of knowledge*, Rom. 2. 20. and that is as much as a sound Creed. We read of the Doctrines according to Godliness. Now there a *form*, or a *scheam of sound words*, 2 Tim. 1. 13. and when men do understand the *System* of the Christian Religion, and openly profess that they do believe those *Articles*, and resolve to stand up in the defence of them, these may be said to *have a form of Godliness*, i. e. they have it in their heads, and in their mouths, and possibly they make no little noise in standing up in defence of them, against such as do professedly set themselves to withstand and undermine them. Now this form of Godliness is not in it self contrary to the power, but a thing necessary for all those who desire rightly to exert it in their Conversation. *Godliness* is a *Reasonable Service* which we owe to God, as we are Creatures endowed with the faculties of understanding and will, Rom. 12. 1. How can we lead godly lives, unless we are

are acquainted with the *Rule* pointing of us thereunto : and the Gospel teacheth us that Rule, for this is that *Grace of God*, of which we are told, that it *teacheth us to deny ungodliness, &c.* Tit. 2. 11, 12. However, this may be where the other is not : men may know, and yet not do ; they may make an Orthodox profession, and yet lead an irregular Conversation ; we are told of such, Tit. 1. ult. *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.*

2. Sometimes the word is used for an outward shew or pretence ; for a mask, or a vizard, or an outward appearance. When a man pretends to be what he is not, and endeavours by his carriages before others, to make a specious shew as if he were such an one, he is said to take such a form upon him. Thus when a man would fain persuade others that he is a Godly man, and useth such words and actions as may serve to impose upon their credit, and in the mean while he hath not the root of piety in him, but is in the gall of bitterness ; he may then be said to have a form of Godliness ; and such an one was *Jehu*, 2 Kings 10. 16.

2. What

2. What it is to deny the Power of Godliness?

A. To make this clear, let us observe;

1. That the power of Godliness comprehends two things in it. The word *power*, used in our *Text*, signifieth the *virtue*, *efficacy*, and *force* of a thing: and also the *faculty* or *principle* from which it proceeds. Hence, in the power of Godliness there is contained.

1. The inward principle of Sanctifying Grace; which is the root of Godliness in a Christian. The power of a thing consists in the *internal virtue* that it hath in it: Now Grace is the very life of Godliness; nor is any a Godly man, who hath not this Grace in him. God always regards the heart, and he knows it, and he will acknowledge no man to be Godly, but him whose *heart is right*. That therefore was it which spoiled all their fair pretences, Psal. 78. 37. *their heart was not right with him*. An Unregenerate man cannot be a Godly man, because he hath no principle of Godliness in him. He that is Godly, loves God, fears God, delights in his Law, hates sin, mourns for it, and rests

lessly

lessly seeks a deliverance from it. This is the very disposition of that Grace which he receives from God, *Tit. 2. 11, 12.*

2. The Efficacy of this principle is in the exercise of a Godly life. This is *Metonymically* called *Power*, because it is an effect flowing from it, and so is a discovery of it: for by the actions the habits are to be discerned, and judged of. Hence, according to the life of a Professor, accordingly is this power evidenced. And hence we read of weak Grace, and strong Grace. When a Christian liveth so in the work of his Generation; as to Glorify God, in a zealous resolute pursuance of Holiness, and withstanding of Sin, in opposition to all that would withstand or hinder him, or discourage his pursuit of it, he shews this *Power*; and this power is opposed to weakness or infirmity. *Peter* had faith, but he did not discover power in it, when he began to sink, *Mat. 14. 32.* O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? *Abraham* had not only faith, but a powerful faith, when he believed in hope against hope, &c. *Rom. 4. 19, 20, 21.* and both these respects may come

come under the consideration of the matter before us.

2. A thing may be said to be denied in two respects.

1. Verbally and professedly: and that is the first signification of the word; but it cannot be universally so understood here: for, for a man to profess the true Religion, and at the same time professedly to deny it, is a contradiction. Though it must be granted, that a man may profess a thing in the gross, and yet deny it in some of the main parts of it, as will appear in the sequel. But this is not all, nor yet the thing which is principally here designed.

2. Practically; and so the word is very often used *Metaphorically*, when men live contrary to their Profession, they are said to deny it: and there cannot be a more effectual denial than this is; and hence these two are set in direct opposition, in the forecited, *Tit. 1. ult.* Now the thing here said to be denied is the *Power of Godliness*; and there are two things in which this consists, answering to the two fore-named

med respects, in which we were told,
the power of Godliness consists.

1. When men pretend to be Godly, & yet by their lives, discover themselves not to be so; and this is a thing too frequent. There are indeed those *Hypocrites* who deceive the People of God, and act Godliness so speciously, that they are not discovered; but there are others, who for all their stickling and noise, do yet express such vanity, and want of any favour of Piety in their lives, that give, at least to discerning Christians, if not to others, just reason to suspect that *the root of the matter is not in them*: such an one was *Simon Magus*, unto whom *Peter* plumply saith, *Acts 8. 23. I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.* He that hath grace, cannot be said to have the power of it in him: such then as lead *Unregenerate Lives*, say that they are such, *Psal. 36. 1. The transgression of the wicked saith in mine heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes; and yet such as these flatter themselves;* verse 2.

2. When men make a great stir about
B Godliness,

Godliness, and yet there is very little of the life of it appeareth in their Conversation. These do not proceed so far as the other in discovering themselves; they do something in prosecution of their profession, and Godly men have charitable hopes concerning them; but yet they are rather *Negative* than *Positive*, because they act so faintly and irresolutely in all they do. If there be the *root of the matter* in them, yet the activity of it is very little: a small temptation allureth them, a little opposition dishearteneth them; they give too much scope to themselves in things which they plead a liberty for; and every trial is ready to lay them open, and discover their irresolution: whereas, if Piety were powerful in them, it would not be so. Now it is the former of these which our Text more immediately and directly aimeth at, however we need not to exclude the latter; and here we may take a more distinct account of those things wherein this ill state or frame of Professors doth appear, for our help to judge of our selves, and of the times we live in.

There are then these things which are
of

the *symptoms* of mens denying the power of Godliness, though they make never so fair a profession of it.

1. When, though men make never so fair a profession of the Christian Religion in general, yet they deny or reject some of the main Articles of it. A sound belief of the *Evangelical Truths*, necessarily belongeth to *Godliness*: and though there is no Theological Truth, but is of great weight, and the denial of it is so far a coming short; yet there are some that are so Essential to Piety, that the denial of them undermines the very foundation of Christianity, and puts men off from the very foundation on which it is built; and yet there are those who glory in the name of Christians, and would be reckoned among the best, who hold such unhappy tenents as prove them to be none. The Apostle speaks of *another Gospel*, which yet he tells us is *not another*, but only a *perverting of the Gospel of Christ*, Gal. 1. 6, 7. and he refers it to those that would bring in the Law over the head of Christ. It is certain that *Christ* is the only *foundation* of the Christian Religion, 1 Cor. 3. 11.

and all true Godliness derives from him. *Faith* belongs to Godliness, both as the ground of our hope for Salvation by Christ, and as the root of our acceptable Obedience to him; we are therefore told, Heb. 11. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please God. The Righteousness of Christ* must be our *Justification*; they therefore who deny the Imputation of that to our Justification, deny the power of Godliness; and Christ is not only our *Righteousness*, but our *Sanctification* too, God hath made him so, 1 Cor. 1. 30. they therefore who hold a power in fallen man by himself to perform true Obedience to God, and that he needs not a new power and principle to be infused into him for it, deny Godliness; and Christ requires Obedience of his people, in conformity to his will, Joh. 14. 15. *if ye love me, keep my Commandments*; they therefore who pretend to a discharge from the *Moral Law* as a *Rule*, deny the power of Godliness: and many other like things might be instanced in.

2. When all their Religion resolves it self into meer forms, and they look no further.

further. There is indeed a duty lying on men, to perform Service to God with the outward man, for the whole man, the *Body* as well as the *Soul*, is engaged for his *glory*, 1 Cor. 6. 20 They therefore who under a pretext of Spiritual Service, reject all External Religion, are far from the power of Godliness. However, when men have taken upon themselves a formality, and seem to be very Religious in their attendance upon it, and are careful not to neglect it at any time, and shew much of zeal during the season of performing it; but as soon as ever it is over, their Religion ends, and they mind it no more till the revolution of those formalities cometh again: these shew themselves to be void of true Godliness. They do indeed lose the proper end of these formalities, because the design of all the *Institutions* of Christ in his Gospel, is to promote a *Religious Life*, and ought for that reason, to influence the mans whole Conversation. When men are zealous and earnest at Prayer, and no sooner gotten off from their knees, but they return to their vanity and folly, they prove there was not

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any

any of the power of Godliness in those prayers : and so of the rest of Duties of Worship, and that may be charged on them, Isa. 29. 13. *with their lips do they honour me, but have removed their hearts far from me.*

3. When all their zeal spends it self in matters of *Worship*, and they are careless in duties of *Righteousness*. The whole revealed will of God is the Rule of Godliness ; and for men to divide, and take but a part of it, and neglect the rest, is to prove that they are *Hypocrites* ; and as there are some who think it enough to follow their Callings, and to do no man any wrong, and to be strict in the Duties of the *Second Table* ; which things they ought to do ; but these alone will not declare them to be Christians : so there are others who suppose that if they be but careful and constant, in doing the Duties of *Natural* and *Instituted* Worship, they are truly Godly : if they read the Word, pray in their Families, attend on the Dispensation of the Ordinances of Gods House, and do shew life and forwardness in these things, they may

may bolster themselves on this, and in the mean while neglect the business of their Calling, ly, steal, oppress, use deceit in their Dealings, carry it very loosely in all matters of Sobriety and Righteousness; these are not Godly, but by thus doing they deny it, and say that their Worship is Hypocrisy; that is a standing truth, 1 Joh. 4. 20. *if a man say, he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.*

4. When they use the pretensions of Godliness for a Cloak to cover their iniquity; though they talk of Godliness, yet they have perverse designs to hide under it. This was a thing which our Saviour charged heavily on the Scribes and Pharisees, Mat. 23. 14. *they devour Widows houses, and for a pretence, make long Prayers.* When Jezebel had a design to perpetrate an horrible Murther, she directs to the calling of a Fast for an introduction to it; 1 Kings 21. 9. and how many are there who can pray and confess their sins, and then sin upon a new score; and it may be then to their confessions and prayers again, and

so in a round? What pretences had that *Harlot* for her insinuations into the *Simple Young man*? Prov. 7. 14. *I have peace offerings with me, this day I have payed my vows*; and herein the *Ungodliness* of those *Jews* is deciphered by the Prophet, Jer. 7. 9, 10. *Steal, Murder, &c. and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say we are delivered to do all these abominations.* What is this but to make *Godliness* a shelter for impiety, than which what greater contradiction can there be?

5. When they abuse their *Christian liberty* to defend and encourage the abuse of the things of this life. It is a precious truth, that *Christ* hath purchased a right for his people to these things, which no *Unregenerate* man can claim; they are all *theirs*, for their use, and to Serve God withal: but as there is an *use*, so there is an *abuse* of these things; and that not only when the heart is set upon them, and they reckon them to be their happiness, but also when they allow to themselves an inordinate

inordinate use of them. When they transcend the bounds of that *moderation* which Christ hath limited the use of them unto, and thereby transgress the Rules of *Sobriety*. When meats, drinks, apparel, recreations are made use of to excess, and to the just scandal of serious Christians. When men insist upon *lawfulness*, and never consider what is *expedient*. Hence there are cautions given in the Gospel about these things, 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31. Rom. 13. 13. 1 Pet. 3. 3. all of which are to put a restraint upon mens taking their liberty too far: Such licentiousness is a denying of Godliness in the power of it.

6 When they can accommodate themselves to men in all their humours. There is a pretence of love, and charity, and condescendency, which men make and plead *Religion* for it; and when it is rightly limited, it is good; but how many are there who abuse that of *Paul*, 1 Cor. 9. 23. *I am made all things to all men*. They are like the Planet *Mercury*, good with good, and bad with bad: When they are among serious Christians,

who more religious and demure in their words and carriages than they are? but when they get among loose company, and carnal men, they can presently turn the Tables, and are like pictures that have the Devil on one side, and a Saint on the other. They can pray, and hear, and receive the Sacrament with the people of God, and they can Drink, and Swear, and Game, and Health, and what not, with lewd men; and are good Companions for all sorts of Company: and is not this to deny the power of Godliness?

7. When they are easily allured or discouraged from the strict Serving of God. They set out bravely in a Profession, but a little thing stops them, and makes them either to *drive heavily*, or to *stand still*: for, when they go quite off, they then lay aside the form too. If a temptation of profit or credit among men offereth it self, they are ready to follow it, and their zeal is damped: or when difficulty or disgrace present themselves before them, they are ready to flinch and turn aside. This is an argument,

ment, at least, that the power is decayed: if not that there never was any; and to this head do those also belong, who in times of *Apostasy*, let the vigour of their profession fall, lose some things altogether, which belong to the practice of Religion, and others are ready to *dy*, as they are charged, *Rev. 3. begin.* In all these respects men may be said to *deny the power of Godliness.*

2. Whence is it that a people in general come to do so?

4. This will be discovered by the following conclusions.

1. Man is naturally a stranger to the power of Godliness. He is so far from the vigorous *activity* of it in him, that he hath not so much as the *principle* of it. The state of nature since the *Apostasy*, is a state of alienation from God. Grace, which is the root of true Piety, is not radicated in the nature of fallen man; but it is a supernatural gift of the Spirit of God, bestowed on us in our *Regeneration*, till which

which we are full of all the principles of *Impiety*; we have a full description of a natural man given us, in *Rom. 3. 10, to 20.* and there is nothing in all of it, but what is directly contrary to Godliness; and yet thus it is with every Child of *Adam* by reason of that woful fall of his; and the Children of Godly men have it in them as well as others: *Jew* and *Gentile* share alike in this, *Rom. 3. 9. they are all under sin.* The difference between the one and the other is only in this, that the one have the means and advantages to seek and obtain a deliverance from it, which the other have not.

2. Men that are born and brought up under Gospel light, have some common resentments of the excellency of the *Christian Religion*. It is true, the natural man hath no *spiritual discerning* of the glorious things of God, revealed in the Gospel, *1 Cor. 2. 14.* However, there is so much of Conviction, in the rational discoveries of the truths of the true Religion, accompanied with a common work of the Spirit on the Consciences of

of men, as worketh with some force upon their *Affections*, so as to raise in them an esteem for these truths, as we find in the stony ground hearers, Mat. 13. 20. *he heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.* Besides, the force of a good and pious Education, together with the common Credit and Commendation which the Christian Religion hath obtained among men that have taken up a profession of it, makes men to stickle for it, upon carnal principles; and hereupon it cometh to pass, that though they do not love the *life* of it, yet they are pleased with a *form* of it, and drawn to engage in the taking of it up, and making a shew of it. They covet to be accounted Christians by those that they live among, though they do not care to be *Christians indeed.*

3. There is a natural enmity in the hearts of Unregenerate men, that makes them *not to receive the truth in the love of it.* They can easily enough receive it in the form of it, upon sinister ends, and because by their so doing, they have advantage to nourish their carnal lusts, and
many

many times promote their fleshly designs; screw themselves into credit and applause; and because they count gain to be Godliness, when the shew of it will gain them any thing in the world, it contents them. But all this while there is a direct contrariety between the lusts of the flesh which rule in Sinners, and the rules of strict Godliness, so that they cannot yield themselves to be subject unto them, for, Rom. 8. 7. *the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.* True Godliness will not suffer lust to reign in the man, but will mortifie it: the man that will be Godly, must mortifie himself, renounce his darling sins, *cut off his right hand, pluck out his right eye;* he must be *sober, righteous, godly,* and that *in this present world;* and this he can in no way comport withal, whiles sin bears rule in him. This is the *Offence of the Cross*: and till he have a new principle put into him, it will remain, and keep him off from real piety.

4. This natural enmity, whiles it is accompanied with the force of a natural enlightened Conscience, makes men to
profess

profess in Hypocrisy. When the Spirit of God makes forcible impressions upon the Consciences of men, they dare not but to do something, which may quiet and ease them, because they would otherwise lead them an intollerable life. *Herod*, though an ill man, yet could not but do many things, because of the force that *Johns Ministry* had upon him, Mark 6. 20. But still the malignity of the heart remains, and that accompanied with *Atheism*, which is lodged in the heart of the natural man, *Psal.* 14. 1. makes men take up with a form, a shew, a pretence, and they hope to put God off with it as easily as to deceive men, and bribe their own defiled Consciences; and this is that which makes men Hypocrites in Religion: they dare not but to do something, to prevent inward disturbance, and yet do it not in love and liking, but on constraint.

5. And God doth often *Judicially* leave them to a false heart. It is certain that if God leave men to themselves, they will Apostatize: and it is awfully observable, that when men live under the

The Peril of the
 the Gospel, and enjoy the clear and convincing Dispensations of it, and are not thereby wrought to a sincere embracing of Christ and his ways, but content themselves with a form ; God in righteous judgment, punisheth them with such a desertion. If they only make a profession of the truth, and do not love it, they are sometimes left to *believe a lie* ; which the Apostle informs us was leading to the *Great Apostasy*, 2 Thes 2. 9, 10. and now every deceiver imposeth on them : If they make a Profession, and mean while some lust or other keeps them off from an utter renouncing of sin, and entirely giving themselves up to Christ, he righteously delivers them over into the hands of their lusts, and they follow them to a notorious denying of the Power of Godliness : awful is that remark of the Psalmist concerning *Israel*, in Psal. 81. 11, 12. *Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts lusts.*

6. And the natural tendency of all this is to a growing Apostasy. When men are once left of God, and begin to deny the power of Godliness, who can tell

Times Displayed. 41

tell whither it will grow at length, one thing will fall to decay after another. They may begin at things *more tollerable*, and *less scandalous*, but that will make the way to introduce far *greater abominations*; and when men take one step in this way, there will be no limits short of that which God restrains them from. If they let go their hold, they are in hazard of falling to the bottom; and if it proceed from denying the power, to the casting off of the form too, it is not to be wondred at; for *evil men*, if left of God, *will grow worse and worse*; and such a declining is very infectious, and will not only hazard to take effectually with those who have no saving principle of piety in them; and whose carnal reasonings, which led them to an outside profession, not only fail them, but are now every whit as cogent on the other hand, and stimulate them to *run with a multitude to do evil*; but will also be too influential on Godly men themselves, to damp their vigour, yea possibly to draw them to carnal compliances, whereby they will be led to a neglect, or perfunctory performance of many duties,

The Peril of the
duties, if not to the doing of many
things derogatory to their profession.

PROPOSITION II.

That these times are very dangerous.
When this grows to be a prevailing di-
stemper among a professing people, it is
sadly *symptomatical*. How and wherein
it cometh to be so, will be evident by
the following Conclusions.

I. That it is a great privilege for
men to enjoy the Gospel, in which the
Christian Religion is revealed to them.
Fallen man had lost the way to life and
happiness, and was gotten into the path
of misery and destruction, nor could he
ever have recovered himself again, or so
much as have known how it might have
been brought about, if God had not
revealed it. All the wisdom of the
Worlds wise men, hath proved it self to
be very foolishness on this account; and
all the contrivances which they have
layed out with greatest curiosity, for
their compassing of happiness, have in
the issue, but entangled them the more
in

in ruin. We are therefore told how the way of mans Salvation came to be known, 2 Tim. 1, 10. *hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.* God hath not seen meet to impart the Gospel unto all; nay, there are but a few in comparison, to whom the clear light of it is revealed: and this is the priviledge which they enjoy by it, that Salvation is come to their doors, *and the things of their peace* are offered to them; whereas others that have it not, remain in darkness, and in the regions of the shadow of death; according to that awful word, 2 Cor. 4. 3. *if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* This therefore is mentioned as *Israels prerogative*, Psal. 147. 19, 20. *he gave his laws to Jacob, &c. he hath not dealt so with any Nation.* For though there are many other Religions in the world, yet there is none of them will afford fallen man any help to escape eternal misery, under which all are held by nature, and to obtain eternal felicity, which every one is grasping after: this is the alone prerogative of the *Christian Religion.*

2. That it is a great and singular kindness of God so to reveal this Religion unto men. There needs no more to prove this, then to consider the former head, *viz.* the singular privilege which is enjoyed by it, and the unavoidable misery of those that have it not. But this will farther appear, if we consider, that God owed it to none. The Salvation it self that is discovered by it is such as none of the race of fallen men deserved to be made to partake in: it was Gods meer good will which provided it for them; and if he had left all *Adams* Posterity to have been for ever without it, he had therein declared his Justice, and done them no wrong. Besides, that all those to whom he sends these glad tidings of peace, and offers of Salvation, were in themselves no better than others, who are left without them, nor could make a better claim to them, than they; he was under no greater obligations to these than to those from whom he hath withheld them, and so leaves them to dye without knowledge. They were equally *Children of wrath* with

with the other, Eph. 2. 3. they were not in themselves better disposed or inclined to give entertainment to this Salvation, than the rest of mankind. Nor could God foresee any better inclination in them to accept of this grace, then what he purposed of himself to bestow upon them; they were every way as bad; thus the Apostle remarks, Tit. 3. 3 4. *we our selves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, &c. but after the kindness and love of our God and Saviour toward man appeared, &c.*

3. That the great business which the Gospel points to, and calls for of man, is *Godliness*. What is intended by *Godliness* hath before been observed. Now this summarily comprehends the aim of the Gospel, taking it in the more large sense of it. It is certain, that the Christian Religion is not meerly *Theoretical*, but *Practical*. It is called a *Rule*, and the use of a *Rule* is to guide to the practice of that which it is a *Rule* of. Now that which the Gospel giveth us instruction and direction about, is *Godliness*: *it teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,*

Insts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, Tit. 2. 11, 12. It calls upon all men to live a godly life, and it shews them the things wherein they are to do so in all respects; and points them whither to go that they may be enabled so to do, who of themselves have no ability to do any thing as they ought, Mic. 6. 8. he hath shewn thee Ob man, what is good, &c. It was for this that God gave his Word and Ordinances to men, and in this it is that he commands them thus to live. When Moses had given Gods Statutes and Laws unto Israel, which were no other than a more dark and shaded Dispensation of the Gospel, he reduceth their duty upon it hither, Deut. 10. 12 and now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, &c.

4. That true Godliness is always accompanied with life and power. It is true, in the exercising of it, there is not always the same force and efficacy of this life exerting it self, and appearing in the prosecution of their Christian Conversation.

tion : and the reason of it is, because the grace which is in the children of God is too often overcome with the remaining corruption which is in them, and hindereth them from doing that which they would. But this notwithstanding, true Godliness hath always in it a principle of Spiritual Life, which shall never be extinguished : Grace is the root of it ; and that is a *living principle* which is put into the man : and where this life is, there is power ; for *life is a power of performing life acts*. When God infuseth a Spirit of Godliness into the Souls of any, he is said to quicken them, Eph. 2. 1. *You hath he quickened, who were dead,* &c. There is no man that is really Godly, but such an one as hath received the Spirit of God, who dwelling in him by his Grace, efficaciously enableth him to serve and glorifie God, by believing in Christ, and following of Holiness : & where this great change hath not past upon the man, he is not Godly, but remains under the powerful dominion of sin and impiety.

5. Hence, where there is only a form without

without the power, it contradicts the very end or design of the Gospel. If by a form we only understand the order and method of outward Worship and Service of God, and the practice of those several Duties which are required of Christians in the Gospel; this is that which ought to be, because God hath commanded it, and if men allow themselves in the neglect thereof, they do both despise Gods authority over them, and do what in them lieth to hinder themselves of the power, inasmuch as God hath made this the way in which we are to have communion with him, who is the author of all saving influences: it is therefore certain, that God requires of all Christians, that they live in outward conformity to his revealed will. But if men rest here, and look no farther, they take up with an outside, and content themselves with it; much more if all their design be to make a shew in formalities, and all their zeal expireth in that, they come short of what God requireth and expecteth of them. This therefore is that which our Saviour taxeth the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* withal, Mat.

Times Displayed.

49

23. 23. *ye tith mint, anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law.* God requireth inward sincerity in the Serving of him, Psal. 51. 6. *thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* Whereas this is only a cover of falshood and deceit. Men by it seek to hide a treacherous heart, and pretend to put off the All-seeing God with an outside and empty Religion: and for this reason we have God so often testifying against it in his word, as a thing which he is very much displeased at; see for this, Ezek. 33. 31. *they come as my people cometh, &c. but their heart goeth after their Covetousness.* Isa. 1. 11, &c. *to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices, &c.* 48. 1. *they make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth and righteousness.*

6. Hence when this grows general, it must needs produce *Perilous Times.* It is dangerous in regard of every individual Professor that is acted by such a spirit, and he not a little exposeth himself hereby to the righteous displeasure of God: needs then must it have a common influence, when it is a growing and prevailing

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vailing

50 **The Peril of the**
vailing malady among a people ; and
this will be evident in several particu-
lars.

1. Such a people shew that they have
not a sincere love to God and his
ways ; this is an evidence that their
Profession is not built upon right prin-
ciples. All true Obedience, is in the
Gospel, called *Love* : and the reason of
it is, because love is the root and spring
of it, and so it is the more distingui-
shing note between sincerity and hypo-
crisy. Now the love which God re-
quireth, is an hearty love, Matth. 22.
37. *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with*
all thine heart, and all thy soul ; this
therefore is the charge that God lays
upon them, in Isa. 29. 13. *they have re-*
moved their heart far from me. The
want of this shews that men have ta-
ken up their profession for by and si-
nister ends ; that the Glory of God is
not their bottom design in it ; for if
they did indeed love God with their
whole heart, they could not be con-
tent in a meer form : if they loved
God, they could not rest satisfied in
the outside performance of duties, and
in

in the Service it felt, and boast themselves meerly in the duty done. They would take no content in any Ordinance or Performance, in which they did not meet with God, and enjoy *Spiritual Communion* with him, which is the true end and usefulness of all the duties which we are commanded to attend upon. He who indeed loveth God, will seek in all things to Glorify him, as that which is the very end of his being and operation: now God is not glorified by a meer form, but so far as the power of Godliness is denied, in any thing which the man doth, so far his name is dishonoured; and the more by there being a form, because hereby their profession is contradicted by their practice, and a discovery is made that they were not indeed concerned for his honour, but indeed do reproach him; and this must needs be very dangerous.

2. Scandalous Sins will grow apace among such a people. *A meer form, let it be never so fondly insisted on, is no fence against the growth of iniquity; but indeed an inlet and introduction to it. It is so far from making men take heed to themselves,*

lest they should offend, that it is a cover under which they seek to hide their abominations. It is the power of Godliness in men, which maketh them afraid to sin themselves, and puts them upon doing the utmost they can in their places, to stop the breaking of it forth in others: whereas a meer form makes them cold and careless on these accounts; and as they will take very little heed to themselves, so others will grow bold upon it, when they see that there is but a very little of zeal appearing in their bearing witness against them. If Professors be cold in the life of Godliness, Profane persons will thereupon grow bold in all manner of exorbitances; yea, and Professors themselves will grow drowzy and careless, and take little heed to their lives, but grow licentious, whiles they place their whole Religion in their formalities; the *abounding of iniquity*, and *growing cold of love*, are joyned together by our Saviour as things concomitant, *Mat. 24. 12.* and indeed, if strict enquiry be made into this affair, we shall find, that evermore *Apostasy* hath in this way crept into the Church of God:
men

men have been very much in the maintaining of their forms, and spent their heat there, and so have grown *lukewarm* in their respects unto God, and hearty love of him, and thought all was well, because Religion carried a fair outside among them; and thereupon scandals have broken forth, and one sin after another, hath dared to look abroad barefaced: and when the *first love* hath been lost, the *first works* have been neglected.

3. They will by degrees lose the form too. Things that are meer Engines, and have no internal principle of life in them, but are moved by the external force of weight, and springs, will soon be down, and then they will stand still, how forcible soever their motion was before. A *Strict Formality* at one time serves a worldly interest, the man can carry on a carnal design by it; and so long as it is thus, it hath its weight to keep it going, and it will move swiftly, but the time may come when it will disserve that interest, and cross the designs of it, and now the man is ready to knock off. Our Saviour instanceth thus

the Stony ground Hearers ; Math. 13. 21. when tribulation, or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended ; and also in the thorny. verse 22. the cares of this world, and deceitfulness of Riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. Besides, the strict outward attendance on the Duties which are prescribed in the Gospel, is not easy for the carnal minds of men to comport withal ; and the gratification of many fleshly lusts is hindered by it, the cravings whereof are so eager, that they will prompt the man to neglect, sometimes one, and sometimes another ; and if they can still but keep up some semblable shew, & quiet their minds with that, they are well sufficed therewithal. *Strictness of Discipline* maintained in the Churches of Christ, is very uneasy to them, and they would fain have a latitude and elbow room, and large allowances given them ; and so usually decays in Religion begin there : others must be born withal, that we may be indulged, and we will connive at their scandals, that we may have the same measure from them. *Constancy in Secret Duties* of reading the word, meditation and prayer,

Times Displayed.

55

prayer, is too spiritual a business for them, and because they are out of sight and observation, they can without open scandal neglect them, and so they at first *intermit*, and at length totally *omit them*. *Family Worship* is a cumber, and it gives them too much hindrance in their worldly business, and their diversions among their companions, which they must allow to themselves; and if they do but attend the Worship of Gods House carefully, they shall still make a fair shew, and be in good repute; and so these shall be first slightly attended, and soon dismissed with a short complement, and in fine utterly neglected. This might have been instanced in many other things, but these may suffice; and thus it comes to pass, that some things are generally left off, and quite lost among a Professing People, and other things are but little better. Thus it was with that Church, in *Rev. 3:1* begin and these are fair, or rather foul steps to the loss of all.

4. Their Profession will be exposed to the reproach of vile men: and truly there are none that do give more occasi-

on for the ways of God to be evil spoken of, than such as these. There are those that hate all Godliness, and thereupon the very strict & formal profession of it is grievous to them, and this maketh them to look with an evil and watchful eye upon those that are so engaged. Now when men make such high pretences to Religion, and in their lives they contradict them; ungodly ones will soon catch it up, and reflect it with bitter reviling: It is indeed a preposterous way of arguing, to condemn the Religion ordained by God himself, which must needs ~~therefore~~ be holy and wise, for the abuses which pretenders to it do put upon it; but wicked men are strangers to that, and can rise no higher in their judgments, than by their observing how those who speak high of it, do manage themselves with regard to it; and for that reason will say, these men talk a great deal of Holiness, as if it were a real thing, but they can indulge themselves in acts of lewdness; they can be very zealous when they are engaged in the duties of Worship; but in their converse with men, they can ly, cheat, dissemble:

dissemble: they can be very demure when they are among their own company, but when they get amongst us, they can Drink, and Health, and Game, and Sweat, and sit up till midnight in our company; yea, they can outdo us in all such things as these are. They were such as these whom the Apostle speaks so severely to, Rom. 2. 21, &c. *Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself, &c.* and adds that remark, *verse 24. the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.* They make nothing of these things among themselves, but excuse one another in them, for they pretend to no better: but in such as make an open profession of Christianity, they tax highly, and put all the aggravation they can to their reproaches; and it must needs be an horrible shame when these reproaches are hoilanders.

5. Those that are truly Godly will be exposed to grievous persecution. It hath been a thing of frequent observation, that such as have spent the heat of their zeal upon Turks, have been most virulent against them that have been careful to

maintain the power of Godliness. Christ himself had no such furious Persecutors as were the Scribes & Pharisees; these also were they who most bitterly persecuted his Apostles; Paul tells us what a formalist he had been, and how he had employed the zeal of it, Gal. 1. 12, 14. *beyond measure I Persecuted the Church of God and wasted it; being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers:* and if men deny the power of Godliness in themselves, they will not be able patiently to bear it in others: and by this means Apostasy grows to that pass, that it will not be safe for any to stand up for real Holiness; as the Prophet complains of those times, *Isa. 59. 15. truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.* Hence it cometh to pass, that if any will be more strict than his neighbours, in the leading of a Godly life among men, and be a Nonconformist to the licentiousness of the times and places that he liveth in, he shall be reviled for it, jeered at by his neighbours, censured for an Hypocrite, and ridiculed for a tender Conscience; and

men would further shew their spleen at them, if it were in the power of their hands. This we have the *Psalms* making a bitter complaint about, *Psalm* 69. 9, &c. *the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me: which* he proceeds to shew in divers particulars, and *tongue persecution* is not a little mischievous, especially when it proceeds from those who pretend to Christianity.

6. The Rising Generation is hereby wofully exposed. Children are either the hope or fear of pious Parents, and by observation of their frame and inclination, a shewed conjecture may be made of what times are like to be when they are dead and gone; for this reason, the duty of *Training up their Children in the fear of God, and in the way which they ought to go in*, is so much urged and inculcated in the Scriptures, as a duty of very great importance. But if the power of Godliness be lost in the present Generation, and Religion among them is dwindled up to an empty formality, there is nothing

So **The Peril of the**
thing that doth more fearfully forebode
the extirpation of it in those that follow.
Children are apt to imitate their Parents,
by a natural respect that they have for
them; and most of all in that which is
evil, because of the sinful corruption that
dwelleth in them naturally. Certainly
then, if Parents are formal, loose, heed-
less to themselves, their Children will
most likely add to it, and become an
increase of sinful men. Yea, and when it
is thus, Parents will become negligent of
the careful Education of their Children,
and take little regard to acquaint them
with the things of their peace, and so
they will grow up to be an ignorant Ge-
neration, *that know not the God of their*
Fathers: and not only for want of be-
ing well taught, will they take liberty to
rebel against Parental Government; (and
it is just, if they teach them not the fear
of God, that they be left to deny that
honour to their Parents, which is due to
them by the command of God) but also
by their examples, they encourage their
Children: for they have no reason to
wonder, if they take liberty to them-
selves, if their Children will do so too,
and

and justify themselves in it; thus did they entertain the Prophet with scorn, Jer. 44. 17. *we will certainly do, &c. as we have done, we and our fathers*; hence that caution, *Psal. 78. 8. that they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and a rebellious Generation.*

7. And such a people are hereby exposed to Gods fearful Judgments: God expects faithful Service from a people that profess his name, according to, 2 Tim. 2. 19 *let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*; when therefore they degenerate to a meer shew, they provoke his jealousy against them, and thereby a door is opened for the breaking in of his wrath upon them; and that both;

1. In Spiritual judgments; and these are the most fearful, though usually the least regarded by a degenerate Generation. When God leaves men up to a spirit of giddiness and heedlessness, and licentiousness, to grow loose in their principles, and inconsiderate in their practices, he therein plagues them terribly and

and this is an usual fruit and recompence of Hypocrisy, and Atheistical contenting themselves, and hoping to put God off with an outside; how awful is that prediction? 2 Thes. 2. 9, 10. *because they received not the love of the truth, for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a ly; and we have such an account given of them, Psal. 81. 11, 12. Israel would none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts lusts.* God withdraws his spirit from such a people, which before enlightened and restrained them, and abandons them to their own follies; and now iniquity breaketh in as a torrent, and bears all down before it; now men grow weary of Gods ways, and follow their own; now the word hardneth, instead of softning: now wholesome Doctrines are despised, and close application is provoking to men; they cannot bear to have their sores rubbed, and must have none but *smooth things preached to them*: now a spirit of slumber invades them, and they are become insensible of their decays, though never so great; and this is a tremendous condition.

2 In Temporal Judgments.

The

truth is, this very frame among a people, is that which opens the gap to let in all those provocations, which will pull down heavens vengeance upon them. As long as the power of Godliness was preserved among them, such sins were kept out, at least from bringing of Publick guilt along with them, because there was a suitable care taken to prevent their breaking out, and due testimony was born against them, if at any time they looked abroad, and endeavours were attended to suppress them: but now they abound, and become daring; and when it is so, God can no longer withhold. God tells them that all the Judgments threatned were for *the avenging of the quarrel of his Covenant*, Lev. 26. 25. and though many particular immoralities usually forerun such Calamities, yet they flow from hence, and the foundation of them is laid here; God therefore threatens *Laodicea* for her *Lukewarmness*, to spue her out of his mouth, Rev. 3. 16. and *Ephesus* for the *loosing of her first love*, to remove the *Candlestick*, Chap. 2. 4. 5. and if we will make a through Enquiry, we shall find that this

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The Peril of the
 is it which hath laid waste populous places, and blown up sometimes famous Churches, and made them a desolation. Surely then such are *Perilous Times*.

U S E 1.

For Information in a few things.

1. We may hence learn, That the best judgment that we can make of Professors, is but of *Charity*. There is a judgment which one Christian lawfully may, and sometimes ought to pass concerning another; and it is our duty, whenever we so do, to judge righteous judgment; and that is such which answers the Rule which God hath given us in his Word, to direct us in the censure that we pass one upon another. Now God hath seen it meet to reserve the knowledge of mens hearts immediately to himself; & our judgment can reach no farther than to the outward appearance; such is the difference expressed, 1 Sami. 16. 7. *man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*; and this is very uncertain. I cannot certainly know anothers

nothers state to be good, but by Revelation; though I may know the state of some to be bad, by observation, as he, Psal. 36. 1. *The transgression of the wicked, faith within mine heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.* The bond therefore of Christian Communion is *Charity*, which ought to think and hope the best of another, allowing for humane infirmities, and judging well of his honest and religious actions, and putting the best and most fair interpretation upon his dubious carriages; and there is a double charity here to be observed; sometimes that which is only *Negative* is the farthest that we can safely proceed unto; viz. we are not to conclude men to be in a state of sin, for such *Spots* as Gods Children may catch; and yet we cannot be without some fears or jealousies about them, when we see little or nothing positively to encourage us; however we suspend our determinate judgments; sometimes we have room for an *Affirmative* Charity, when we see that proceed from them, which bespeaks them in our hearts, to be Godly, and zealous Christians, because of their good and excellent Conversation.

on. Now when our judgment proceeds upon these grounds, it is a regular, and therefore a righteous judgment; and this may be right when we are mistaken about men. A man may be in a state of nature, and yet I should sin if I judged him to be so; and he may be in a state of Grace, and yet it may be my duty to be suspicious about him; and the ground or reason of this lieth before us plain in our Doctrine, *viz.* because a man may have the highest and most commendable form of Godliness, and yet be utterly a stranger to the power of it: now the former of these is open and manifest; it is exposed to publick view, and every one may see it, whereas the latter is secret, and hidden from men, and known only to God, and the mans own Conscience. David had an excellent esteem for Achitophel before he discovered himself, Psal. 55. 13, 14. *mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance; we took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company; and he did not amiss so to think of him.* The Disciples were more ready to suspect each one himself than Judas when

when Christ told them that *one of them* should betray him; and they were not to be blamed for it. Paul was much endeared to Demas, and made use of him in his Travels and Ministry, and it was right for him so to do: and yet all these were ungodly men, and their hearts were unsound all this while. A man may carry it among men with greatest forwardness and constancy in outward performances, follow all the means of grace in season, and out of season, and carry it very reverently at them, discourse very knowingly and loftily about the mysteries of the Gospel, pray like an *Angel*, highly commend the ways of God, be very circumspect in his words and actions, exceeding charitable and honest in his Dealings with men, diligent in the Calling that God hath set him in; and yet his heart all this while not right with God, but he may pursue it for by and sinister ends, and upon pitiably mean motives: and yet make no discoveries of this falseness to us, or of any thing that so contradicts his profession as should undermine our Charity: how then

then should we look on him as any other than a Saint? when yet he may be a Devil, or a *Wolf in sheep's cloathing*; a meer Hypocrite. Hence no wonder, if good and wise men are sometimes forced to change their opinions about men, as *David* did respecting *Achitophel*; and the blame is not in them, but in those that give the occasion for it; and this may be a caution to Professors, to beware how they build the confidence of their safe estate, upon the charitable thoughts of good and discerning men; they may often give shrewd guesses, but yet they may be mistaken in you: and remember that you must ere long be called, to give an account of your selves to him who *searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of men.*

2. We may here see a satisfying reason why some that have been *Eminent Professors*, do afterwards prove *fearful Apostates*. That there have been some that have so done, we have awful instances left on Scripture Record: and we need look no farther for examples of this kind, than those three who were mentioned

mentioned under the former head, who in their time, were renowned for their profession, highly advanced in the Church of God, and were accounted of by the best men they conversed with, and yet are left upon register for their horrible falls, and as awful instances of Gods amazing Judgments. *Ecclesiastical History* also affords us plenty of such examples in every Age of it. Now men may be apt to be amazed and wonder at it, and enquire how it comes to be so? and some have made misimprovement of these instances, and endeavoured to establish from them, the false Doctrine of the *total Apostasy of the Saints*, and to undermine the precious Doctrine of *Perseverance*. But the truth in hand will direct us to a fair account of this matter, and render it a thing that needs not to be so much admired at. It is a certain truth, that none who have had the least spark of saving grace in them, did ever utterly lose it again. They have indeed fallen far, when it hath pleased God to leave them to themselves, that he might try them, and let them know what is in them, and that it is by Grace that they stand: Such

Such remarks are made upon David, Solomon, Peter, and others. But such woful Apostasies as we are now considering of, are not a falling from true Grace, but a discovery that they never had it. That observation of the Apostle is to be made upon all such, 1 Joh. 2. 19. *they went out from us, because they were not of us: for, if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest: and indeed, it is that which is to be expected, both in the nature of the thing, and in the righteous judgment of God.* If men take up an high profession, and engage themselves in all the formalities of it, without a sound principle within, or a root of saving Grace in the heart, they *build upon the sand without a foundation*, and it is not to be counted a strange thing, if a Storm of Temptation maketh that specious house to fall. Men that become Religious for base ends, and have some ignoble and fleshly design in it, will sooner or later find those unworthy ends to fail them, and something or other to come athwart them, which will contradict the design they are driving

driving, and then the efficacy of them
ceaseth. That Profession that hath no
life in it, will of it self run out in a little
time, and come to nothing if it be let
alone. Besides, there is nothing wherein
God is more affronted, or his honour
more reflected on, then by mens thinking
to put him off with a shew, and to hide
the deceitfulness of their hearts from
him, as if it were possible for vain men
to impose a cheat upon him: no wonder
then if he, in his righteous judgment suf-
fers them to lay aside their vizar, and ap-
pear to the world in their own true co-
lours; leaves them to throw off the
form, who took up contented with a
meer form; and thereby God righte-
ously lays them open to the view and
discovery of men, who before had de-
ceived them; and maketh their *name* to
rot above ground, whose only care had
been to provide themselves with a name
on Earth. Let it not then stumble any
serious Soul, when *Tall Cedars fall*, when
great Professors, and such as have had a
great name, come to nothing, and either
turn aside to *damnable heresies*, or immerge
themselves in grossest *Immoralities*: but
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adore the wisdom and holiness of God, in laying men open, and making them to appear in their own colours; and let it be a solemn warning to such as are ready to boast themselves of their great profession, and to grow confident thereupon; and invite them, *not to be high-minded, but to fear.*

3. This will let us see a reason why Gods awful Judgments do sometimes break in upon a people which make a great Profession. God must be acknowledged to Govern all the Affairs of this world: all the evils and calamities that break in upon men at any time, are of his bringing, both as to the things themselves, and the time of them. The Famines, Pestilences, and Wars which overtake a people, and bring them low, and carry in them a witness of the Divine Displeasure, are of his ordering; hence that, Amos 3. 6. *Is there any evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it?* Now these Calamities do not only befall such places and people as have not known God, nor had his name called upon them, but live without him, and drench

drench themselves in all manner of Enormities, and heaven daring abominations: the light which is in the natural Consciences of men, will easily satisfy them in the reason and equity of such Providences as these are, and men will rather wonder at the patience that bears so long with them, than the severity which is exercised upon them. But the Temptation lieth on the other hand, and men are apt to be amazed at the Providence of God, which breaks in upon a professing people with terrible Judgments. When a people that are called by Gods Name, and are engaged in a profession of his Worship, and make a great shew of zeal in it; they stand up for the preservation of the purity of it, and withstand those that would introduce any Innovations: do yet feel severe Dispensations of this nature, the world is startled at it, and say, *What meaneth the heat of this Indignation?* and they themselves are prone to find fault, and expostulate with God about it, as they, Isa. 58. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not, &c.* whereas if we follow up the Doctrine under our consideration, to the right im-

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provement of it, we may be satisfied in the reason of this. I confess, it is hard to censure Gods Children individually, or personally for the afflictions which they meet with in their particular Concerns; for the design of these is very often for their trial; such were *Jobs*, and yet they were very sharp and sore: it would therefore be very injurious to charge them as Hypocrites on this account. But, when God brings sore and wasting Calamities of Sicknes, Famine, and War, on a professing people, and they are wasted and brought low by them, we are, according to the whole tenour of the Scriptures, to allot this to the anger of God; and God is not angry without a cause, *Amos 3. 4. Will a Lion roar in the forrest, when he hath no prey?* Now we may safely conclude that the Displeasure which God hath taken at them, is not for their profession it self, or for their care to maintain the outward Forms and Ordinances, that he himself hath Instituted, and made the means of Communion with him; hence that, *Psal 50. 8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices,*

ces, or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually with me; but it must be something that his holy and jealous eye seeth amiss in their Serving of him, and that must be something where in they do, to his observation, *deny the power of Godliness* which they pretend to; and because this may be, and a people that *have a name to live, may be dead*, Rev. 3. 1. it is not to be wondred at, but is a great call to them, not so much to enquire whether it be so, for the language of Providence awfully speaks that, but to search after it, that they may find it out, and seek to get it removed by true Repentance, and to call upon each other in their language, Lam 3 40. *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord*; and where it is so, there is a Rule also to judge of their state, when Judgments are removed, viz by enquiring whether the cause be taken away; and if not, they should look upon it only as a respite, and *space to repent*, which if they do not so improve, worse things are to be looked for in a little time.

4. This tells us, that if we would make a true judgment of Professors, we must observe how their lives agree with their Profession. It is true, men may in the management of their Profession, carry it very fair, and behave themselves so cunningly in their visible Conversation, as to deceive the most judicious Christians; but yet it is a frequent thing, and God shows his just and holy displeasure at men, in suffering of it to be so, that those who are *Hypocrites*, and make a great noise in a *form of Godliness*, do in something or other notoriously deny the power of it: not only do they sometimes display too much of sinful folly and corruption, for so may the best of men do, whiles the law in their members hath so much of power and influence in them: but there is something wherein they do egregiously discover their hypocrisy, and offer just grounds to serious Christians to suspect that all their formality, is nothing else but a piece of pageantry. *Jehu* did this, notwithstanding his great zeal in reforming the Kingdom of *Israel*, from the Idolatrous Worship of *Baal*, 2 Kings 10.

Times Displayed.

77

29. *howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam, Jehu departed not from after them*; and it is certain, that let men be otherwise never so formal, yet if there be some sin which they live in the constant practice of, which is against the light of the Word and Conscience, and contradictory to the life of Holiness, it is too manifest a sign that such a lust is not mortified in them: and if there be one that is not so at all, there is none that is so really; and one such Spot is enough to disgrace all the other *fair colours* of a specious profession. It is not enough to observe how a man carrieth himself in the house of God, or in his attendance on the observable Religious Duties that are practised among Gods People; but we must follow him to his other, and ordinary conversation, and observe his carriage in that, how he behaves himself in his particular relations among men, and if these do not agree with the other, we have reason to be afraid that all is not as it should be with such a person. Our Saviour Christ would not have us to value the tree by its fair leaves, and flourishing blossoms, but to see what are the

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fruits it bears, and by those we are to
conclude concerning them, *Mat. 7. 16.*
ye shall know them by their fruits.

U S E II.

Let it be for *Trial*; and it may be applied both on a publick, and on a personal account.

I. On a publick account; and here let us make our remarks on the present times by this *Rule*; and see how it is with us in this regard, and that both in respect of *Symptoms*, and of *Prognosticks*; and I think that we have a loud call to engage in this scrutiny at this day; and therefore to move us to be serious and thorough in this *Examen*, let us consider;

I. Christ hath made it our duty to *know and discern the times*. The times are not always alike; it is a world of Change that we live in; and as there are Changes of Times which pass over the Children of men, so there are the *Symptoms* of them, by which a rational and probable conjecture may be made about them
before.

before hand, and we may, by observati-
on foresee what is like to come, and it
is the prudence of all such as live in this
world, to have an insight into these
signs. It is true, the Symptoms of the
Times are of two sorts, *viz. Natural*,
which are to be read in the order and
posture of second causes, for, though
there be a *contingency* belonging to these
things, yet there is a natural *connexion* be-
tween such causes, and such effects, which
in the ordinary course of Providence
will be produced, unless they be some
way over-ruled and prevented. When
the *Kingdoms are moved* one against ano-
ther, when animosities encrease be-
tween them, when there are tumults and
disquietments, these are the usual leaders
to miserable devastations, &c and these
things are not to be despised, because
God makes use of second causes in ac-
complishing his purposes; but this is not
the main thing. There are therefore
Moral Symptom, and these are peculiarly
to be minded; in calculating whereof
we are to proceed according to the te-
nour of Gods dispensing himself to a
people, as such who are in Covenant

with him; which are to be read in his word; and that both in the warnings there given, and in his wonted courses taken with his people in such circumstances. Now by a right application of these, the times may be discovered, whether they be good or evil, safe or perilous, and Christ reproves them for want of skill and observation in this regard, Mat. 16. 3. *ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the Skies, but can ye not discern the signs of the times.*

2. It many ways concerns every one of us to know the peril of the times that we live in. Nor indeed can we do well without it, for,

1. There is a special *Generation work* lying upon every Christian, according as the times are. It is true, every Child of God ought to endeavour to do the whole will of God, and to neglect no known duty at any time; we owe our whole life to his Glory, and in this respect all times are alike to us: but still as the times change, the special and more peculiar deportments required of

Times Displayed. 81

of Christians do change with them; and hence there is one thing which is the work of one Generation, and something else the work of another. It is observable, that God commends *Noah* with this remark, Gen 7.1. *thee have I seen righteous before me in this Generation.* Which in part at least, intends that he had Served him according to the present condition of the Generation he lived in. Hence it is said of *David*, Acts 13. 36. *that he Served his own Generation by the will of God*; and it is certain, that there was one work for *David*, to do in his time, and another for *Solomon* to do in his.

2. It is every ones duty in his place, to thrust in'o the gap, that he may keep off the evil threatned. When there are sad *Prognosticks* of the times; when the Clouds begin to gather apace, and mischief apparently impends over a professing people; when Gods anger is kindled against them, and sin hath opened a wide gap for it to come in, and evil begins to croud in at it, all that fear God should endeavour to please God, to pacifie his anger, and prevent the

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the mischief: hence that Admonition given upon a threatning, *Amos 4. 12. thus will I do unto thee, Ob Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, Ob Israel.* There is a way to hold Gods hands, and turn away his displeasure; we read that *Moses* did so, *Psal. 106. 23.* and we find that God complains, that when he looked for such an one, there was none; and he gives that as the reason why the torrent of his fierce Indignation brake in upon that unhappy people, *Ezek. 22. 30, 31. I sought for a man, &c. therefore have I poured mine indignation upon them.* It is true, every one is not in an equal capacity to this work, or of doing alike publick Service, for the putting away of that sin which is the provocation; there is a work lying upon persons in Publick Place, such as *Moses*, and *Phineas* were, who may, if they are faithful, do a great deal upon this account. However, there is no Christian, but if he be upright, and will be industrious in the station wherein God hath set him, may do something with God, which may contribute not a little to the publick good; for God hath
 assured

assured us that he hath a respect for such as these, *Isa. 66. 2. to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.*

3: They are the sins of the times that make them peculiarly perilous. The great danger that a people are exposed to, is from the anger of God which is kindled upon them: if he be pleased with them, they are safe, nor need they to be afraid of the threatenings of the world; they have *the name of God to run into, and that is a strong tower, Prov. 18. 10.* But if God be displeased at them, and his wrath begins to wax hot, they now ly open to every mischief; their defence forsakes them, and every evil will make a prey of them. Now, if God be displeased at a people, Sin always is the procuring cause of it: he taketh pleasure in them whiles they do faithfully Serve him, *his delight is in those that fear him:* but sin is the thing that he cannot endure; and when he hath so warned them against it, as *Jer. 44. 4. Ob do not this abominable*

ble thing that I hate, and yet they will indulge themselves in it, he is now grievously provoked; and such a people ly open to his Judgments: his Holiness, Justice and Truth do oblige him to punish them, for he hath said that he will do it, *except they repent*; and if he engage in this work, it will be terrible.

4. Hence they that would prevent the danger, must do what in them lieth, to put away the sins that have exposed their people thereunto. They that would keep off threatned Judgments, must thrust out the sin that hath exposed them thereto; the cause must be removed, if the effect be either prevented or made to cease: all the other courses that men can take, let them seem to be never so probable, will never avail, whiles this is neglected. Sin will blow up the strongest Fortifications, and turn the edge of the best tempered weapons, take away the vigour of the most couragious spirits, and turn the most mature counsels into foolishness. *Jehu* spake the truth to him who demanded, *is it peace?* 2 King. 9. 22. *What peace so long as*
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the Whoredoms of thy mother Jezabel, and her Witchcrafts are so many? we are told, in Prov. 21. 30. there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. Now all these counsels are against him, by which men devise to fortifie against the threatnings of God, and resolve still to retain these sins, for which he brings his Judgments upon a revolting people. God himself therefore makes such a demand of them, Jer. 5. 7. how shall I pardon thee for this? &c. and this is the direction which he giveth them, as that which is alone like to succeed; viz. to put away their sins, and return to their God again; this is the best prudence, because there is a promise of good made unto it, whereas all other courses are threatned, whiles this is neglected; Jer. 7. 3, 5. Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place, &c. Hence there are none that can do any kindness to such a people, but those who thus do: hereupon God so upbraids those Pastors, Jer. 23. 22 if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to have heard my words, then they should have turned them from their evil ways.

5. And there are usually some peculiar sins which God bringeth his Judgments for, and hath a special aim at. True, when God draws up an *Indictment* against a people, he puts a great many articles into it, as in *Ezek. 22.* but yet there is something particular that he bears upon, as that which is leading to the other, and so carries a more aggravated provocation in it. There are the causes and the beginnings of an Apostasy, which are not only sins themselves, but are chargeable as leading the way to all the rest. When God cometh to root a people up for their sins, they are grown to the height of provocation, as *2 Chron. 36. 14, 15.* he used means to reclaim them, *till there was no remedy*; but other Judgments of his do often come upon places, when iniquity is not arrived to such a prodigious height; and sometimes God chargeth one, and sometimes another as the leading evil, thus *Isa. 57. 17. for the iniquity of his Covetousness I was wroth with him*; and in *2 Sam. 21. begin.* the Famine is said to be for Sauls slaying the Gibeonites.

6. Hence

6. Hence without observation men cannot do their duty in this regard. Unless we know what is the provocation, we shall not understand what is the instant duty that God requires of us: the sins must be found out, before they can be particularly provided against, and be suitably repented of, and turned from, and so the proper means be used for the putting of them away: and how shall this be but upon observation and search? and that by taking notice what are the commands of God, and the Rules of his word; and viewing the frame and practice of men generally, &c. comparing them herewithal? and hereupon want of consideration is a thing which God looks upon as a great aggravation of their sins, and chargeth them with stupidity on the account of it, Isa. 1. 3. *my people doth not consider.* Jer. 8. 6. *no man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?* and when God hath a controversy with them, he invites them to consideration, Hag. 1. 5. *now therefore thus saith the Lord, consider your ways.*

7. Formality

7. Formality, attended with denying the power of Godliness, is the first bad *Symptom* in a professing people; we have observed, that Apostasy from a fair profession is not wont to be all at once, but it hath its gradual steps, and may have many removes before it comes to the height: But all Apostasy beginneth with the defect of the power and vigour of Grace in men. So that whatsoever will be an argument to discover mens declining from what they sometimes maintained, will also give evidence to their denying of the power; it being of it self a practical contradiction of that piety which men would have the world to believe, that they do sincerely profess.

Here then let us take a brief prospect of the *frame* and *genius* of this people on this account; and for our help in this necessary duty, let me offer at the following remarks.

I. That there is a *Form* of Godliness among us, is manifest. Let us take the notion of a *form* in either of the senses before

before observed in the explication of the Doctrine, and it will appear to be so. If we look upon it as intending an outward *species, shew or pretence*, whether the thing it self be sincere, or only in pretence ; it is certain that the generality of this people do give it out, that they are the people of God, that they acknowledge him to be their Sovereign, that they are engaged in his Service, and that they do stand up for the Gospel Ordinances and Order. Or if we take it for the *Rule* that men declare themselves to be under the obligation of ; we have a sound *confession of the Faith*, which we declare that we adhere unto ; and are not a little zealous for the upholding of those Ordinances which Christ hath Instituted in his Gospel ; these things are evident, and possibly there may be more of this among us, than in most other places.

2. But the great enquiry is, whether there be not too much of a general denying of the power of it ? God forbid that any discouragement should be offered to those who are serious and watchful Christians

Christians, whose hearts are truly set for the Glory of God, and the promoting of his interest: and let it be the encouragement of all such, that if there be but a *few names* in a degenerate *Sardis*, God doth not overlook them, nor will he forget them. See how comfortably he speaks to such, Rev. 3. 4. *thou hast a few names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* But if the other frame be grown too general and prevailing, the *Symptoms* are bad; and let us remember, that there are many discoveries which may be made of such a spirit, which, though they are not all found in every one, yet if they are found distributively, and spread generally, it will amount to the thing that we are enquiring after. When God chargeth a people in this regard, he doth not always say you are all thus & so, but such are found in thee, see Ezek. 22. 7, &c. and is it not too much thus with us? Whence else is it, that there are such things as these that follow, to be observed.

x. That there is such a prevalency of so many *immoralities* among Professors? I confess that it must be granted, that in the best times, and in places where the power of Godliness is most flourishing, there have been, and will be those that have not the fear of God before their eyes: there were so in the times of the greatest *Reformation* that we read of in the Book of God. In this world we must expect that *Wicked men will be mixed with the Godly*, and such as will dare to shew their wickedness in their Lives, and not be afraid to *Transgress in a Land of Uprightness*. But when such are not countenanced, but due testimony is born against them; when they are condemned in the places where they live, and a note of infamy and scandal is put upon them; this will not be charged on such a people for *Apostasy*: But when such sins grow frequent, and those that have taken on themselves a name of being Religious, begin to indulge themselves herein; and men that allow themselves in such things are not *Reproached* for it, but are in as good Credit

as the best, it then becomes a bad symptom, and saith that the times are declining and perilous. Much more when such as these will undertake to justify, and patronize such things : and are there not sad complaints made on this account ? I shall here instance only in some that are more notorious. Are not Gods *Sabbaths* wofully neglected ? How little care is there used in making of due preparation for them ? How wofully can such as would be esteemed Godly, encroach upon holy time, and be engaged, either in secular business, or in vain Company, and possibly in publick houses, when they should be at home, in their Closets, or with their Families, Sanctifying of Gods day, and shewing of the *Honourable esteem* they have for it ? And I am well satisfied, that *where the strict Observation of Gods Sabbath is lost, there the Power of Godliness is gone.* How much complaint is there made of woful *Dishonesty* in their dealings, practised by such as can talk high of their Religion ? How many fallacious tricks they can use in their Commerce ? How deceitful in their Labour ? How false to their words

Times Displayed.

91

words and promises ? as if dissembling and lying were no reproach to the name of Christians. How many *Intemperate Church Members* are there reported to be, who spend their precious time in frequenting Publick Houses, and keeping of loose and lewd Company ? who can come to the *Lords Table* on the Sabbath, and wrong themselves by excessive Drinking on the week days ? How much *Animosity, Contention*, and implacable bitterness of Spirit, breaking forth in indecent words and carriages, between such as are bound in the strongest Evangelical ties to *Love one another, and meekly to bear with each others infirmities* ? How much raising, spreading, and receiving of *Slanders and Defamations* one of another ; contrary to that Charity which ought to *Cover a Multitude of sins* ? These, and a great many more of like nature, which might have been added, so far as they spread and prevail, and begin to grow common, are an ill Omen ; for, they are indisputable denials of the power of Godliness, at least in the vigour of it, in those who are Guilty of them, for *that teacheth men to Live Soberly, Righteously and Godly.*

2. That

2. That there is so little *Success of the Gospel*, notwithstanding the clear dispensations of it that are enjoyed among us. The Gospel is the Great instrument which God hath seen meet to make use of, both for the sowing of the seeds of Godliness in the hearts of men, in the great work of Conversion, and for the strengthening & establishing of it where it is already sown: & this efficacy it will have when it becomes *the power of God to Salvation* in men, as we are told it is, *in all that believe, Rom 1.16*. True Godliness discovereth it self in a Cordial compliance with the Gospel in its designs, which are these: and when these fail, and the work of Conversion and edification are at a stay, it is a sign that Piety is gone to decay: and the more plenty God affords to a People of these means; and the more of light and life they are dispensed withal, the more notorious is this symptom. What there hath been enjoyed among us upon this account, God knows, and this people also shall be made to *know that there have been Prophets among them*. How few through Conversions are to be observed;

observed? How scarce and seldom? Men go from Ordinance to Ordinance, and that from year to year, and it may be they are sometimes a little touched, awakened, affected, and make some stir for a while; but how few are there who are effectually and thoroughly turned from sin to God? It is to be hoped that there are more than we know of; this work of God is Secret, and in some it is wrought without a noise: however, this is a certain observation which may safely be made, that where there is no *outward Conversion*, Charity hath no ground to proceed upon, to believe that there is an *inward* one; for, were the heart savingly changed, that would influence and alter the life. Yea, were men but *pricked at their hearts* under the Ordinances that they frequent, they would cry out for help and direction, and we should hear of them: So that if men take a great deal of delight in the means of Grace, and yet can be content without settling a saving interest in Christ, who is presented and offered to them therein, it saith that they are sealed on a form without the power; it is a sad complaint

complaint which the Church maketh in, *Iſa. 64. 7. There is none that calleth on thy name, that stirreth himself up to take hold on thee.* And may not there be found just reason to revive it in this day? And how little is there to be discerned of a growing Grace, in them who pretend to have experienced a work of Conversion in them? Grace is of a thriving nature, when it is indeed *Planted in a good heart,* made so by the operation of the Spirit; and more especially when it is planted by *many Waters*; when it hath plenty of suitable means afforded to it, and the Spirit of God influencing them: and if men did savingly profit by the Gospel, would it not make some discernible discoveries of it self? would there be no fruits by which it might be judged to thrive? and yet what do many, who have had all manner of helps afforded them in *Gods Vineyard*, for a great many years; and that have used much diligence in their outward attendance upon them, more than they did at first? do they not seem rather to grow downward than upward, to have lost rather than gained? did they not seem to express more

more of life, vigour, watchfulness over themselves, endeavour to walk worthy of the Gospel, when they first sat out, then they do now? do not the things that formerly looked lively and flourishing, now languish, and appear as if they were ready to expire? whereas we are told, in Prov. 4. 18. *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

3. That so many grow weary of Christ's yoke, and seek for more liberty. The Lord Jesus Christ hath provided a yoke, which he requireth all that will be his Disciples to take upon them, Mat. 11. 29. *take my yoke upon you*; and for our encouragement he hath told us that it is easie, ver. 30. *my yoke is easie, and my burden is light*; and it is certainly so to all those in whom there is the power of Godliness; The Apostle tells, us, 1 Joh. 5. 3. *his Commandments are not grievous*; nay, it is so far from being so, that David crieth out, Psal. 119. 97. *Oh, how I love thy Law*! It is burdensome only to the carnal and corrupt part in man; and when it becometh intollerable to any,

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this

this faith that they are wholly corrupt. That which is connatural will not be burdensome, and love will make every thing which it embraceth, easy. Christ hath taken off the heavy yoke of the *Jewish Ceremonies*, of which *Peter* saith, *Acts 15. 10. neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear it.* But he hath not discharged them that are under the Gospel Covenant from duty and subjection. *Gospel Liberty* is far another thing from *licentiousness*. When therefore men will not Serve Christ, unless they may live as they list, and without any controll, they may indeed talk of his Service, but in truth they deny it: and no man of prudence will entertain such a Servant in his Family. But then there is a peculiar yoke of Christ, which he demands of all Christians that they submit themselves unto, *viz.* the *Discipline* which he hath appointed to be dispensed in his Church, and a subjection to all the *Orders* and *Ordinances* of the Gospel. But alas! how many are there who cry out, *What a weariness is it?* that seek to pluck up the hedges and remove the wall that Christ hath

set about his *Vineyard*, and lay it open in Common; and if they may not be as *Lambs in a large place*, will stand off from Communion with the Churches of Christ? How many Religious pretences do many make for their neglecting of the known duties of the Gospel, and solemn *Institutions* and *Injunctions* of Christ? when there is a great deal of reason to suspect, that it is nothing else but an unwillingness to engage themselves in the strict ways of Holiness, and bring themselves under the *bonds* of the *Gospel Covenant*, lest it should lay too severe a restraint upon those lusts of theirs, which they are resolved not to part withal, whatsoever cometh of it: where as were there the power of Godliness in them, and did they feel, and bewail the deceitfulness, and unruliness of the corrupt part in them, they would gladly come under the most potent obligations to Holiness, and reckon it so far from being an *injury*, that it is their real *privilege* to be fast bound to the ways of God.

4. That there is so much of *Contempt* cast upon the *Gospel Ministry*: The Lord

Jesus Christ hath appointed a Ministry for the outward Dispensation of his Gospel unto men, and for the promoting of Godliness among them; and hath made it an ordinary necessary medium to this great end, according to that, Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they believe in whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall he Preach except he be sent?* and for this reason, there is a good esteem to be had for this Ordinance of his, by all that would approve themselves pious. It is true, there is a difference to be acknowledged between the work it self, and the persons that are employed in it. As to the persons in the Ministry; though it be scarcely probable that men should profit by their Ministration, whiles they despise their persons, or entertain a low and a base esteem for them, and therefore it is said of the better times, Isa. 52. 7. *how beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace?* &c. yet certainly when God hath put them in this Service, and hath made them both wise and faithful in the discharge of their work, they are to be well accounted of
for

for their works sake. When therefore their zeal for the glory of God, and their fidelity in *not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God* to men, makes them to be scorned and reproached, it bodes ill: and such carriages to them, speaks in his language, 1 King. 22. 8. *I hate him, for he doth not Prophesie good concerning me, but evil.* But this must be confessed, that the work it self is an Ordinance of Christ; and when men grow weary of the thing, look upon it as a needless charge, had rather live without a Ministry, than to bear the burden of it; or count so meanly of the work it self, that they think any one fit enough to be employed in it, who is so bold as to thrust himself upon it, though he hath nothing else to commend himself to it, but noise and nonsense; and those that are both able and faithful are despised; as also, when men think it no great matter to neglect their attendance on the Dispensation of the Ordinances by them, every small occasion is enough to make an excuse of, from *Coming to the House of God*: or if men do come, and afford their bodily presence there, yet they lit-

tle regard the Doctrines taught, but at best, carry it like them, Ezek. 33. 31. *they hear thy words, but they will not do them, &c.* If they reprove sin, and come close to their darling lusts, they are either enraged at and revile them, or scorn them; if they urge Duty never so clearly and earnestly, yet if they like it not, they will not believe them, nor be at the pains of those Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether those things were so, Acts 17. 11. and how much of this nature are we acquainted withal?

5. The loose Conversation of Professors. The more ample mens declared Creeds are, the more scandalous must their licentious Conversation needs be; because they visibly deny, what verbally they own; their Profession and their Conversation do, in the Consciences of all men directly contradict one the other. I am verily perswaded, that the Name of God suffers more by the uncautious Conversation, of those that call themselves the Children of God, and seek the reputation of being Saints, than by any others in

in the world ; for these pretend, by their lives, to *exemplifie* the Holiness required in the Gospel, and to set others a copy of what is a Godly life, according to the mind of Christ revealed in his word : and if this be to be Christians indeed, may not the carnal worldlings upbraid them, and say as many do, *What do these more than we ?* When all the difference between the one and the other, is only at their devotions, which the one carefully attends, and the other carelessly neglects ; but follow them from thence, and observe their carriages among men, and you shall scarce, if at all be able to discern which is the *Professor*, and which is the *Profane* person ; yea, possibly they will allow themselves to do such things, which the other scorns to do. God hath made that the duty of all that declare themselves to be his, Eph. 5. 15. *see that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ;* and Paul could appeal to them on this account, 1 Thes 2. 10. *you are witnesses, and God also ; how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved our selves among you that believe ;* this was to confirm the power of Godliness. But when

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 those who call themselves *Children of the light, and of the day, have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, how much do they herein deny that piety which they talk so much of? but alas! how little is this Holiness practised among us? how much of the contrary is to be seen? certainly, where men that profess Christ, are yet *ashamed* of him, and *afraid* to lead another manner of life than the generality of men do; but are as prodigal in their vain communication, as licentious in their talk, and as obscene in their carriages, as ready to comply with the vain customs of the times and places they live in, as passionate in their carriages as others are; and have no more of the pure Religion and undefiled, than is to be found in *Publicans*; and this grows to be a prevailing and common distemper, it bespeaks the loss of the vigour of Religion; and all mens fair talk, and pretending to be of strick principles, will not salve them, but the more disgrace them; and it saith that the power of Godliness is so far lost.

6. The grievous neglect of *Family Worship*.

Worship. There is a *Worship* which is due to God from men; and it doth not only concern men personally, but relatively too, in the several combinations which God hath ordained to be among them. The most publick Religious *Worship* which was at first performed by men, seems to have been in *Families* before it came to be attended in the more open and frequented *Assemblies*, which is thought to have begun in the days of *Enos*, Gen 4. 26. nor doth the making of this latter a duty now give men a discharge from the former any more than that did from secret *Worship*. The principal parts of *Family Worship*, are the *Reading of the Scriptures* and *Prayer*; and the reason of it is, because every Governour of a Family hath a charge lying upon him, to see to the Religious management of it, that so it may be a Family consecrated to God. As to *Prayer*, it is of it self a piece of *Natural Worship*: and the light of nature in meer *Heathen*, taught them, not only to pray to him whom they accounted God, but to perform it in and with their *Families*; and that they had a

Worship in their Houses, is fully testified in Pagan Antiquity; for this reason there is such an imprecation used against the *Heathen Families that call not on Gods Name*, Jer. 10. 21. and it shews them to have been guilty of sinning against the Law given to man at first, else this neglect would not have laid them open to such a curse; and this is certain, that Family which is without their daily joyn't prayers unto God, is an irreligious Family, and exposed to the dreadful vengeance of Heaven; and for men whom God hath entrusted with the care and charge of Families, to bring up their Children and Servants without prayer, is to bring them up in *Atbeism*; and yet there is lamentable complaint of this neglect even in this place, where there is so much of conviction offered unto men of their duty: and how many have there been, who, when God hath opened their eyes, and given them a true sight of things, have bitterly lamented themselves, that they have lived in *Prayerless Families*? and that which maketh it to be the more doleful, is that they have not been the Families of
such

such as have made no profession, but been openly profane, but of such as have made an acknowledgment of their Engagement to God, and have before merr espoused the *Gospel Covenant*, and made promises to God that they would observe his Commandments to do them. There are some who pray not at all with their Families from one end of the year to the other; others who it may be on a Sabbath day find a time to pray for all the week. If Godliness had any power in them, it would not be so: Their sense of the need of Gods blessing upon their Family Affairs; their belief that it is of him to preserve their Houses from Desolation, their Substance from Casualties, their Families from mischief; their apprehension of the need which their Children and Servants have of being brought up in the fear of God, and the danger of their losing the very face of Religion, by such neglects as these; yea, the aw of Gods indignation for such contempt offered him, would make them afraid of living in the frequent, much more the constant omission of this duty. If this grow to be

be a common distemper in the midst of us, it saith, *we are departed from God*, and we have just cause to look for some fearful departure of his from us.

7. The woful *ignorance* that prevails among us. The knowledge of God, and of his ways is so necessary an help to the power of Godliness, that the Word of God frequently expresseth true piety by the knowing of God: and ungodly men are often stigmatized with that title, *such as know not God*. It is therefore mentioned as a great blessing, when God bestows upon a people, the means whereby they may be helped in obtaining of this knowledge, Jer 3 15 *I will give you Pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding*. When therefore a people enjoy plenty of means, and have the clear Gospel Dispensations in the midst of them, and all manner of advantages to store themselves with a treasure of this knowledge, and yet for all ignorance abounds, and encreaseth among them, and that grows to be too general a fault with them, which the Apostle chargeth them

them withal, Heb. 5. 12. *when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God*; it saith that the life of Religion is much decayed among them. If there were that love for God, which men would be thought to have in them, they could not but earnestly desire to have acquaintance with him, and that would encourage them, yea, and stimulate them thankfully and industriously to husband such rich opportunities as are afforded them for this purpose. We are told of some who tell God, *they desire not the knowledge of his ways*, Job 21. 14. and would we know who they are, we shall find that they are *the wicked*, verse 7. and I fear that there will be a great many such wicked ones found upon search, who have but a little distinct knowledge in the very Fundamentals of the Christian Religion; nor do they seek after it, but are very well contented to live without it; nor are indeed able to distinguish between sound Doctrine, and pernicious Error: and I believe that this will be as fearful an indictment against this Land,

as any place in the Christian World; because there hath been so much light shining in the midst of us, well may God expostulate with us, as Prov. 17. 16. *Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?* and it will be righteous with him, if he should take away this light from us, because we no better improve it.

8. The little favour of Godliness in the private Conversation of Christians. If there be a powerful activity of Grace within, it will certainly break out in the life; and the tongue, which is the great instrument given us to glorifie God withal, will readily make discovery of it; what saith he, Psal 45. 1. *mine heart is inditing of good matter, my tongue is as the pen of a ready Writer*; and where will this be more ready to discover it self, than in the converse of Christians one with another? these having one heart, and being all bound one way; the heart that is full of God, will be like a vessel that is filled with new wine. which must have vent.

vent. *David* could not hold long in, though in wicked Company, Psal. 39. 2, 3. *I was dumb, &c. my heart waxed hot, &c. then spake I with my tongue.* But there is a Communion of Saints; *David* saith, in Psal. 119. 63. *I am a Companion of all them that fear thee;* and he tells us that *all his delight is in these,* Psal. 16. 3. and why so? but because they are suitable for that Communication which his heart breathes after. What made him so to love *Achitophel* whiles he seemed to be Godly? he tells us, Psal. 55. 14. *we took sweet counsel together;* and we are told, Mal. 3. 16. *that they that feared God, spake often together;* and what do we think it was that they discoursed about? An heart that is filled with Grace, is then in its element when the man is discoursing about the Kingdom, and the affairs of that; hence we have that advice, Eph. 5. 18, 19. *be filled with the spirit, speaking to your selves in Psalms, &c.* When therefore Professors, either shun the company of the Godly, and seek intimacy with vain persons; or when they come together, spend their
time.

time, either in vain, foolish, and hurtful discourses, or at best about the affairs of this world, and not one warming word about the concerns of their Souls and Eternity, it saith that there wants the power of Godliness; if their *treasure* were in *heaven*, their *hearts* would be there too; and if so, they would delight to be talking of their own Country, and the glorious things of that: whereas it is too notorious, that such Conferences are very rare; and let a serious Christian begin them, and he shall find the most to be silent about them, and look as if they were put out of their Element; but if we divert to worldly affairs, or idle Stories and Slanders, they are full of matter. If Godly Communication be burdensome to us, it plainly saith that our shew of Godliness is but a shew, and hath no life in it.

9. The bad *Symptoms* that are upon the *Rising Generation*. It hath been a frequent observation, that if one Generation begins to decline, the next that followeth usually grows worse, and so on,

on, till God poureth out his Spirit again upon them; and for the most part some desolating Judgments intervene. Thus it was with *Israel* soon after they came into *Canaan*, Judg. 2. 10. *there arose another Generation, which knew not the Lord*; and then, verse 14. *the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel*, &c. The decays which we do already languish under, are sad, and what tokens are there on our Children that it is like to be better hereafter? we are going off, and they are coming apace on the Stage, and the management of the great concerns of Religion will in a little time be devolved upon them; and what aspect hath this upon it in the observation of serious Souls? God be thanked, that there are so many among them that promise well, and the Lord add to, and greatly increase their number; But alas, how doth vanity, and a fondness after new things abound among them? how do young persons grow weary of the strict profession of their fathers, and become strong disputants for those things which their Progenitors forsook a pleasant Land for the avoidance of, and that not only for themselves,

themselves, but that their posterity might be removed from the temptations of? Besides, it is almost a general complaint of Family Governours, that their Children and Servants are weary of the yoke, and are not willing to be under their Command, or observe the good order in the Family which they require them to attend: that they are in combination one with another, and do joyn hand in hand in refusing of that subjection which they owe to their Superiours, and debauching of themselves with their night revels, and meetings in bad houses, to drink and game: they force the reins into their necks, and will be no way curbed in from their exorbitances; and these also the Children of Godly Parents, and such as have been carefully and religiously Educated, and many a time solemnly charged with tears and earnest adjurations, to *Serve the God of their Fathers with a perfect heart, and a willing mind*, and warned of his fearful departure from them if they do not. How far this decay is to be imputed to the neglect of Family Governours, either in a prudent managing of their authority,

ty, or in a careful setting of a good and holy example before their Families, is a matter of awful consideration ; for certainly they are sorely afflicted in this matter, and ought to judge themselves upon the account : however, this plainly discovereth that the life of Religion is panting and gasping among us.

18. The inefficaciousness of Gods severe Judgments. The Judgments which God brings upon a professing people, are witnesses of great decays in Godliness, for that is even the controversy which he manageth by them. But when these Judgments come upon a people, and are often repeated, and God followeth them with a long series thereof, and they are bruised, and broken, and brought exceeding low by them, and yet they do not work to the declared end of them, which is to reclaim them from their lifelessness, and to quicken them to express the vigour and power of Grace, but they are stupid and sottish children, and do not lay to heart these Dispensations of his, as he complains, Isa. 42. 25. *be poured on him the fury of his anger ; and it bath*

bath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart; yea, when God complains as one that is weary of correcting them, and upon it threatens to leave off, because it is fruitless, and there is no good cometh of it, as Isa. 1. 5. Why should you be smitten any more? ye will revolt more and more. Hof. 4. 17. Ephraim is joyned to his Idols, let him alone. This is a token that the power is not only decayed, but expired; and let us make diligent enquiry upon this account; we have been for a long time harassed with judgments which have been brought upon us, and wasted us; there have been many of them, and they have been continued: God hath manifestly witnessed his Anger and our Apostasy by them; and he hath waited long in the way of his judgments, for our Repentance; and after all he hath changed the course of his Providence to us-ward, and hath again restored us to peace and plenty, and afforded large measures of health among us: but it is still a solemn enquiry to be made by us, viz. whether Gods holding back his correcting hand, & opening of his bountiful hand

hand to us, be because he is reconciled to us, or because his patience is wearied with our insensibleness of, and stupidity under his judicial dispensations : if it be the former, all is well, and we may abundantly rejoyce in it ; but if it be the latter, there is then a sad *prognostick* in it. Well, this may soon be determined. What of the power of Godliness is recovered among us by all this ? nay, what outward Reformation is there wrought by it ? or are we not more stupid and senseless under all ? let us not account these remarks to be trifles, or things not worthy our enquiring after ; but let us be serious in our observation ; and if it be thus we may be sure that we live in *perilous times*, and may by thus doing obtain the character of *Prudent*, for we are told, Prov. 27. 12. *the prudent foreseeth the evil.*

2. Let us make this Trial upon a *personal* account. Let every one of us apart prove himself by this *Rule*, and see how it is with him in this regard ; whether we have the power of Godliness accompanying, or have only taken up with a
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form or shew of it; and this also is a
matter of no small importance, for,

Consider,

I. It highly concerns every serious
Soul, in perilous times, to secure himself.
It is true, every one, as he is a Member
of the Body, ought to do his utmost for
the safety of the whole, for if the body
suffer, he must expect to have a share in
it, which will be grievous; yea, and
will be peculiarly so to his conscience, if
he hath not done his endeavour to pre-
vent it; and we observed, that there is
no Christian, but hath more or less of
advantage, in his place, to do something
that way. But yet sometimes all that he
can do will not avail; *Iniquity* will a-
bound, and perils will grow on apace.
Now there is a *prudence* which he ought
to use, in seeking to save himself; and
for that end to take the observation of
the hazards which the publick is exposed
to, to awaken him to this duty, accor-
ding to the forecited, Prov. 27. 13. *the*
prudent foreseeth the evil and hideth him-
self. It was Noahs great wisdom, that

he took the *warning* of the approaching Flood, and provided himself with an *Ark* against it came, whereby he was saved, when the world was drowned in a deluge, Heb. 11. 7. God therefore invites his peculiar ones, to get into their Chambers before such a time, Isa. 26. 20. *Come my people, enter thou into thy Chambers, hide thy self, till the indignation be over past.*

2 The Apostasy, which denotes the times to be perilous, is laid in *Individuals*. The reason why the power of Godliness decays in any place, is because it doth so in this, and that, and the other particular person, and by this means it comes to be generally so: So that if every one in particular would carefully see to himself, and to his own heart and life, and endeavour to be upright with God, and put away his own sin, there would be a general reformation, and Religion would again flourish in the vitals of it. He then who would keep himself free, and not be guilty of contributing to the publick stock, and *filling up of the Ephah*, must take care of himself, and
let

let others do as they will, he must see
to it that he be not involved in the
sins of the times, which render them
perilous: and he hath the more need
of caution and resolution on this ac-
count when such sins grow common
and there are a great many of evil ex-
amples that invite him to a compli-
ance; on this account we have this
precept, *Exod. 23. 2. thou shalt not follow
a multitude to do evil.*

3. There is a common interest in
publick Calamities which such times
bring, which is unavoidable. Every
man as he is a member of the whole
and hath his outward concerns in this
life involved with them, cannot but be
touched and afflicted with the evils
which come upon the places they live
in, and will, without doubt, feel much
of the smart of them: and God is not
to be charged with wrong dealing in his
Providence, by reason of this, because
herein he treats with them as a *Com-
munity*; ; than which manner of treatment,
there is nothing more agreeable to the
common sentiments, of humane reason

second is therefore practised, and justified among men. If War, Sicknes, Famine, break in upon a people, the good as well as the bad will feel the trouble of it; and the thought whereof is a good incentive to us all to do our best to prevent them; and if they come, it should engage us to be humble under them; hence how doth the Prophet resent such a time? Jer. 4. *Oh my bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my heart, &c.*

4 There is yet a way to keep clear of the sins of the times which provoke God to sending such Calamities; & out of doubt every Child of God is concerned to think of, and endeavour it. There will be a vast difference in the Soul, or inward man, between being accused by our Conscience in this regard, that we have contributed to them, and having a witness within, that we have maintained our integrity in the midst of all the evil examples, & temptations offered us to allure us from our duty; that we have stood our ground, when others have quitted their post. Certainly, a sedate spirit then, will help us to bear up under all that we encounter, with great tranquillity. It is the Psalmists demand,

mand, Psal. 11. 3. if the foundations be wholly overthrowen, what hath the righteous man done? so some Translations read it; 9. 4. he hath kept himself from the blame of it; and it was no small inward relief to those pious ones, who could in a dimly dark time, make that appeal, Psal. 44. 17, 18. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely, in thy Covenant; our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way. Surely then, every one that fears God, and studieth his own best interest, will take heed to himself in this regard.

5. And God hath some special favours in reserve for them that thus do; though they may meet with much of trouble, yet there is a distinguishing dispensation of Gods Providence towards these at such a time, though there be much of his holy Sovereignty acted in it, & the difference which he puts between these, and those who have been guilty of the Apostasy, doth not always appear to the common view. Sometimes God strangely preserves them in times wherein his Judgments are dispensed among their people; those great priviledges

priviledges engaged to them that fear God, mentioned, in *Psal.* 91. do belong to such as these, and when it is best for them, they shall experience them. We find that in order to the astonishing destruction which God would bring upon *Jerusalem*, there must be a mark for preservation set upon some; and we are told who they are, and what a charge is given concerning it, *Ezek.* 9. 4. *The Lord said unto him, go through the midst of the City, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh; and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of it.* We have accordingly special promises made to such; to *Baruch*, *Jer.* 45. 5. *thy life will I give thee for a prey*; to *Ebedmelech*, *Chap.* 39. 16, 17, 18. Sometimes God mercifully takes them away from the evil that is coming, and they are lodged safe in heaven before hand, *Isa.* 57. 1. *the Righteous is taken away from the evil to come*; and thus God accomplished his promise to Godly *Josiah*, 2 *Chron.* 34. 28. *thou shalt be gathered to thy fathers in peace, neither shall thine eyes behold the evil that I will bring upon this place*; and sometimes,

yea very often, he reserves special favours for the Children and Posterity of such; they shall have some remarkable blessings bestowed upon them: thus God promised to *Jeremiah*, Jer. 15. 11. *verily it shall be well with thy remnant*; we find that God threatens to cut off the Posterity of, and the very name of such as are Ring-leaders in Apostasy; see Jer. 29. 32. *he shall not have a man to dwell among this people.* Whereas we have singular favours promised to the Successors of those that kept close to God in times of the Decays of Godliness, see for *Isa.* Ezek. 44. 11. 48. 11.

6. Hence it greatly concerns each of us to try our selves, how far we are personally guilty of, or free from this Sin. If we be not careful on this account, we may deceive our selves; there are many ways in which we may contract Guilt upon this account; and how deeply should it abase us when it is so? and if by the Grace of God, we have been preserved, it will be matter of inward consolation under the greatest troubles that are before us. But how shall we know this, but by a diligent self search? Let us then,

then, at such a day as this is, be very industrious and curious about it; and here let us in general observe, that it is not enough for us to cry out of the evil of the times, and make a great many of pathetic complaints about the degeneracy of the age, and the decays which are come upon Religion, and lay abundance of blame on this account, on this or that person, or order of men among us; there is a great deal of this *zeal* to be seen and heard proceeding from such as are evidently themselves not a little guilty on this account: yea, such is the *deceitfulness of sin* that is lodged within us, that if we take not the more heed to our selves, it will draw us to hide our own formality and hypocrisy, under this very disguise; and thereby, not only blind others with it, and cheat them in a good opinion of us, whiles we cover our sin with it, but put a cheat too upon our own Souls, by perswading our selves that this heat proceeds from a sincere heart, when it is a meer imposture. Give me leave then to offer a few *Rules of Trial*, and let us deal faithfully with our own Souls in the application of them.

I. Are we content with a *name*, or do we restlessly seek after the truth of Godliness? It may be we have made a fair and formal profession, and carried it very acceptably to those whom we live among, and have the good word, and abounding charity of the best, who take us for *Israelites indeed*, and have given us a great room in their hearts and affections. It is no doubt but that every truly Godly man accounts it to be no small blessing to have the hearts and love of those that fear God; hence *Paul* desired prayers on this account, *Rom. 15. 31.* *Strive in your prayers for me, that my Service may be accepted of the Saints.* But it is another thing to do all for applause, and look no further in the things that we do, than to be seen of men, and to have praise from them on account thereof: Our Saviour taxeth those *Hypocrites* with this, as that which belonged to their character, and an evidence that they were such, *Mat. 6. begin.* and you may know whether you do thus or no, by this enquiry, *viz.* if you do obtain the good word of men do you take up with this, and satisfy your selves in it as a good

good reward, and count it enough to settle you in this perswasion, that all is well, and so you trouble your selves no further in searching into your own estate, but conclude upon it, that all must needs be right. He who builds his assurances on the good opinion which holy men have of him, and seeks not for a better establishment of them than that amounts to, is a meer *Formalist*: Whereas, if you have any of the power of Godliness in you, you will allow this but its due, & when you enjoy the greatest measures of it, you will reflect and say, it is indeed a mercy in it self, and if I am sound, it is a fruit of Gods love to me, to give me such a room in the hearts of his Children; but I may not, I dare not rest here, I have to do with the *heart searching God*; I may deceive the wisest and most discerning Christians, who cannot see my inside, or know what are my principles or aims, but I cannot impose upon him who seeth my inward parts, and will ere long call me to the strictest trial, and lay me open; and this will put you upon a deeper search; it will be so far from nourishing carnal security in you, that it

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will

will stir you up to the exercise of an holy jealousy, as knowing that none can see into your inward state and frame but only God and your own Consciences. Thus Paul speaks, 1 Cor. 4. 3. *It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of mans judgment :* and we know that *Sardis had a name to live, and yet was dead.* Rev. 3. 1.

2. Do we lay out all our care and cost on the out side of duties, or are we most sollicitous about the inside of them? There is the *External part* of the duties that we are called to do, and we are not to be negligent in it : there is a right and decent carriage of our bodies in the worship of God, which is not to be neglected ; a suitable expressing of our selves in our words, when we address our selves to God in our Prayers ; a decorum to be used in every Service that we engage in the performance of : but still this is the least thing that is to be minded in it ; but if we make this our all, or if it be the principal care that we concern our selves about, & we think we have done enough if we have been accurate in this, it argueth Hypocrisy. If, when we come to an

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Ordinance, our utmost concern is, to lift up our hands, or turn up our eyes, or frame our selves to an outward reverential gesture : or if when we pray, all our business is to put our Confessions, or Petitions, or Thanksgivings into handsome words or expressions; or curious Language, or laying out our gifts, and making a flourish with them, in any duty that we are engaged in, this is *meer formality*. If there be any power of Grace stirring in us, our great business in addressing our selves to any duty, will be to search for our hearts and see where they are, and how they are disposed; and in pursuing the discharge of these duties, to look after our hearts, and see that they do not steal from us, and get into *the Corners of the earth*; we shall be solicitous that our Graces may be brought into exercise; that in our *hearing* of the word of God dispensed to us, we may be waiting to *hear what the Lord hath to say to us*, and that with a preparedness of Soul to submit to his will, and *receive his truth in the love of it*; that in our Prayers to God, we may have an active, lively sense of our Spiritual wants, and that our faith be in

870 **The Peril of the**
a suitable exercise. David in this regard,
first takes notice of his heart: *Psal. 57. 7.*
My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed,
I will sing and give praise.

3. Do we content our selves with doing
of Religious duties; or do we insatiably
seek after Communion with God in them?
God hath appointed the Ordinances of
the Gospel, and the several Duties which
he hath Commanded in it, to be a medium
of Communion with him in this life: nor
is there any real saving benefit or advan-
tage that accrues to us by them, but so
far as this fellowship is enjoyed. There is
much of *bodily exercise* in these Services,
but it *profits little* if Godliness doth not
influence it. God indeed hath reserved
immediate communion with him for a-
nother life, when there will no more need
of, or occasion for these things; but if
we hope to enjoy any with him here, it
must be in way of the means enjoined:
but if we intend nothing else in all this
labour that we are at, but only to do the
Services themselves, and count them as
our task, which if we can get through,
we are contented, and think that we have
done a great deal: if we attend upon
them

them constantly, and that is the thing that we make our boast of; that we go to hear Sermons in season, and out of season; that we read so many Chapters in the Holy Scriptures every day; that we pray morning and evening, and do not neglect thus to do; that we come to the Lords Table, and receive the Sacrament in the seasons of it; and reckon that we have done a great deal of Service for God by all this; we deceive ourselves, we are but meer Formalists; such were they, *Iſa.* 48. 1, 2. But if we value every duty that we perform, according as we find God manifesting himself to our Souls in it; if we enjoy his presence, and blessing upon us in it, we are satisfied, this he lots upon, *Pſal* 63 3, 5. *To see thee as I have seen thee, &c. and my Soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.* If we miss him there, we are exercised with trouble, and cannot rest till we find him again; this is the proper spirit of real Godliness.

4. Do we conform, or carefully live contrary to the iniquity of the Times? We before observed, that when the power of Godliness decays among a people, there

there are many sins that will thereupon grow into common practice, and when they are so, it becomes a reproach to them that will not run in the stream, or who dare not to joyn with others in them: Now here is a notable trial of the strength of Grace in the Children of God, and if it hold its own here, it is powerful indeed. There are no such ill practices introduced, but it is with a pretence of *lawful liberty*, and their Consciences are censured as being needlessly nice, that boggle at them, or are scrupulous about their joyning in with them; *as if the custom of an evil thing, took the evil from it, and it must needs be good, because it is come in fashion*. How is it now? are you afraid of crossing the humours of the Generation? are you ashamed of standing alone? are you affrighted at the bug bear harange of *Singularity*? and can you thereupon allow your selves practically to comply with such things, because they are customary, and the generality of people make no bones of them, though you find your own minds uneasy about them, and something within that tells you, these things ought not

to be? this may convincingly tell you, that you want a great deal of the power, which the people of God ought at such a time to express; for God is now *proving* of you, and *trying your integrity*; and if in such small temptations as these are you cannot withstand, but are carried away by them, how then will you do, when you are called to encounter with fiery trials? But if you resolutely maintain your integrity, and are not drawn to entertain the allurements that are offered you, but resolve by the Grace of God, to keep your selves pure from these things, and not joyn in with the excesses and exorbitances which are prevailing in the Generation which you live among; this will be a good witness for you, that the *work of faith* acteth in you *with power*. This is the advice which God gave to the Prophet, in *Jer. 15. 19* *Let them return unto thee, but do not thou return unto them.*

5. Do we do what in us lieth to reclaim others? It is not enough for us to complain of the evil of the times, and cry out of the Apostasy which the present Generation is fallen into; though this also we ought to do, with a due resentment on
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our hearts, but God many times puts advantages into our hands, to be instrumental in preventing the breaking forth of such sins, or of bearing a full testimony against them, if they do appear: Some have larger opportunities than others upon this account; *Magistrates* in their Station, and the *Ministers* of the Gospel in theirs; but more private Christians are not without a *price* in their hands neither; and though the blessing of endeavours depends on the Grace of God, who only can make them effectual, yet Conscience obligeth them to their duty; and Parents and Family Governours owe it to their Families; and one neighbour unto another: and surely, if our hearts have any life in them, we will not be wanting in this, so long as there is the least hope of our doing any good by our endeavours. If thus you appear on *Gods side*, it will be a good testimony for you: but if you either regard not how things go, and think it enough to look to your selves, that you stand clear, and do not *joyn hand in hand* with sinners; or if you are afraid to do your duty, lest by it you should provoke others to anger, and expose your selves.

selves to their scorns and reproaches, you shew that the Grace in you is very faint in its actings ; we have that command on this account, Eph. 5. 11. *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

6. Do we cordially and seriously mourn for the sins of the times? Sometimes it is so, that the Children of God can do little else but grieve at the iniquities which they see. This indeed is not enough, when we may do more ; but many times it so falls out, that the more endeavours are used to suppress the evils of the times, the more doth *iniquity abound*, and men are hardened in their wicked ways, and grown beyond all counsel or restraint : and when it cometh to this, it encreaseth the grief of serious souls ; they do herein see how much Gods name is dishonoured, which is very bitter to them ; herein also they discover the misery that is upon sinners, & the fearful calamities that are boded by this frame that is upon them : and the tender pity which they have in them for their people, and for the souls of men thus exposed to eternal ruin, fills them with sorrow ; so we have the Psalmist expressing of himself,

himself, Psal. 119. 136. *Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law; and verse 158. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved.* Thus the Prophet expresseth his resolution, Jer. 13. 17. *if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears; thus good Lots integrity is expressed, 2 Pet. 2. 8. this righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with their unlawful deeds; and how acceptable this Spirit is to God, appears by the care that he takes of such in an evil day, Ezek. 9. 4. And this mourning, if it be right, will drive you to importunate prayers unto God, and hard wrestlings with him for such a people, and for such persons, that he would give them Repentance and spare them. How is it then with you in this regard? is it thus? Are you secretly affected with all the decays you see in the midst of us?*

7. Are we constant in maintaining close Communion with God in secret duties? It is true, an Hypocrite may do the matter of secret Duties as constantly

as a godly person, though usually when he doth them, it is with a trumpet blown at the door: but it is certain that there is more of Temptation, either to neglect altogether, or else to be very slight and perfunctory in the performance of such services as have no witness of them, but God and our own Souls; hence there is not a better proof of the power of Godliness, to a mans own Conscience, than what may be observed in the carriage of himself before God in secret. If you are not only conscientious to do the duties themselves; for that a natural enlightned conscience may prompt a man to, and make him afraid to neglect it: but if you are as careful of your hearts, as if all the world stood by and were able to read them; if you really seek God in these performances, and are not satisfied but in the manifestation of himself to you, and the experience of the fruits of his grace in you, and do truly bemoan your deadness, and indisposedness in these duties, and humbly seek to him for the pardon thereof, and help against it, you have then a witness within you, that you are more than formalists; and a testimo-

The Peril of the
 ny which is better than all the applause
 and commendation of the best, & most
 discerning Christians. Let us not then
 be perfunctory, but thorough in these
 enquiries, as knowing that it is of unspea-
 kable concernment that we be not mista-
 ken in this affair.

U S E III.

Let this Doctrine serve for *Exhortation* :
 And that,

I. In general to us all; for we are all
 concerned in it, and there are several les-
 sons of advice which it will afford us;
 especially these.

I. Beware that you do not reject the
 external part of Godliness on this pretence.
 There is an unhappy Generation of men
 in the world, who would fain persuade
 others to think that they have arrived at
 higher degrees of perfection than their
 neighbours; and among other their e-
 gregeious follies, this is one, because God
 condemns the form which is without the
 power, they thereupon cast off all form,
 and call all external Worship so; and be-
 cause *God is a Spirit*, and requires of *them*
that

that *Worship him*, that they do it in *spirit and in truth*; they upon this, restrain all *Worship* to that which is internal, and reject all that is bodily, to the *Old Testament*, and *Legal Dispensation*, and that which is antiquated now in the days of the *Gospel*; whereupon they pronounce all those to be *carnal*, who plead for or practice it: It is upon this score that they will acknowledge no such thing as a *Sabbath*, or separated time that is made holy by Gods so separating of it for the holy Services of his people, giving out that all time is now holy to the people of God, and every day a *Sabbath* to those that are spiritual. They will have no *Humane Preaching*, because they are all taught of God, and have the *Spirit* in them to lead them into all truth, and that anointing whereby they need not that any should teach them. They despise the *Gospel Sacraments* as carnal things, and spare not to mock at them, and plead, they have already received that which is the spiritual design of them, &c. it would be a thing superfluous in such as them any further to make use thereof: yea, they endeavour to make a ridicule of the *Ordinances*

dinances themselves, and of the Elements which are made use of in them: Yea, to that height of spiritual frenzy are they arrived, that they cast contempt on the very written Word of God, & they call it a *dead Letter, paper Divinity*, and strenuously deny it to be a perfect Rule of Faith and Manners; and say, that all those that bind themselves to it, & take it for their directory, are guilty of despising the spirit, and his teachings. This, and a great deal more of such like stuff they seek to infect mens minds withal. But these are so far from being truly spiritual, that they are in truth enemies to the power of Godliness, and it concerns us all to avoid them as *filthy dreamers*. Here then, to establish you in this point, Consider,

I. There is an external part of Religion required of us by God. God indeed requires the heart, and without it, all the rest will not be accepted; but he requires not that only, but the body too. Man consists of these two parts, & he is to glorify God with them both, being both *bought with a price* for that very end, 1 Cor. 6 19, 20. The body is the Souls Organ, and it is to perform its Im-

Times Displayed.

141

perate acts in and with it; and if the heart be right set, the whole man will follow after it. For this reason, God hath prescribed in the Gospel, external Duties to his people, and requireth of them a Conformity thereunto: he hath appointed the Dispensers of the Gospel for the benefit of men, and in this respect, they are reckoned among the Ascension Gifts of Christ, *Eph. 4. 10, &c.* these are *to preach the word in season and out of season*, *2 Tim. 4. 2.* & what use would there be of these, if there were none to be hearers? Christ hath appointed Sacraments to be celebrated *in remembrance of him till he cometh*; they are therefore to continue of use until then: yea, all the parts of Outward Worship are laid down in the Gospel, and it is not for nothing; and Christians are warned *not to neglect the assembling themselves together*, *Heb. 10. 25* and to *exhort one another daily*, *Chap. 3. 13.* Surely then we cannot omit or neglect, much more reject these Ordinances of Christ, without bringing upon our selves the guilt of neglecting his Command.

2. Hence, true inward Godliness will
make

make men to be Conscientious of attending on these Duties. Godliness teacheth men to worship, fear, and reverence God, and this fear if genuine will exert it self in Obedience to his precepts; they are put together, *Eccle. 12. 13. Fear God and keep his Commandments.* If Godliness be rooted in the heart, it will sanctify the Soul to the discharge of its work, and that belongs to it, to use the outward means as an instrument to help us in our Serving God, and as the things wherein we testify our acknowledging his Authority over us; and in this it eyes his precepts as the *Rules* by which it is to act; So that when it sees that God hath required such duties as these of us, it disputeth not the rationality of them, nor demurs about the natural efficacy there is in them for the advancing the design of them, but it acquiesceth in the will of God, and dareth not but to pay conformity thereunto. This therefore all Christians are to be taught by the Ministry of the word. *Matth. 28 20. Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.*

3. It must then needs follow, that to cast off the form of Godliness, is a farther step

step of Apostasy. We have already observed, that to be content with the form without the power, is a woful degeneracy, and shews that men do contradict their own Profession : but yet it is a more audacious discovery of mens being departed from God, and having forsaken his fear, when they put off their vizar, and appear bare faced in their *Irreligion*. The former supposeth them to be in their Consciences convinced of the worthiness of the true Religion, and that it is a thing which God requires of men, though they want a love for it ; but this casts the greatest open contempt upon it that can be : and, let men please themselves as they will with their own deceivings, yet they are nothing better, who reject it upon *Spiritual Pride*, then such as do so to gratify their own *Carnal Lusts*.

2. Beware of censuring these for Hypocrisy, who are careful to keep up the form which God himself hath prescribed to us. That God hath not only directed us how we are to Serve him with our inward man, but that he hath also told us how he expects that we worship him with the outward man, is a truth unconfutably grounded

grounded in the Second Commandment. Now there are many that make nothing of this, but can take up with any form: and if there be any who pretend Conscience to keep close to what God hath revealed of his mind in this respect, and not to dare to go beyond it, they are ready to charge Hypocrisy on them; but let us consider:

I. That the most powerfully Godly, will be most Conscientious in this matter. True, to stickle here, and to regard nothing else, but in other things to lead a loose Conversation among men, is enough to detect men of falshood, and shews that it is not the fear of God which acts them in this regard. But it is a thing to be observed, that God hath, in all ages of the Church, made his *Institutions* the great *Test* of the *External Obedience* of his professing people: and herein he hath asserted his *Prerogative* to appoint what shall be the *Media* of Communion between him and them: and hereupon if we look into the affairs of the Church of God in former times, we shall find that the most holy men, have been the most afraid of deviating here: and those mysterious

Prophecies

Prophecies in the latter part of *Ezekiel's* Visions, have an eye to Gospel times, and we there find how God speaks to the Prophet, Ezek 43. 11. *Shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the Ordinances thereof, and all the Laws thereof.*

Again, there are some who are more careful than others in attending on external duties, they dare not to neglect them, or put them off upon vain pretences; and how many are there who condemn them for this, as if they did it all but for a shew? that they read, hear, pray in their Families, and wait upon the publick Ordinances *in season and out of season*, only to make men think them better Christians than others; whereas doubtless the most h-ly men are the most careful in these performances, only they dare not to rest in these things.

2. Thus to censure them, is to usurp Gods Prerogative in judging the heart. When men do their duty in the outward part of it, it is so far well; and though it be a truth, that there are those that make a great shew, and yet do all with a false heart,

heart, yet all that use care in this, are not such; and it is a great sin for you to judge all, because we are told that there are some such, and the more sinful is it, when we have no other reason for our thus judging of them, but only because they are more careful in the doing of the things which God hath commanded them, than we are; as if it were a crime for any to outdo us in the practise of Religion; or *as if it were necessary that men must be profane, if they would escape having the brand of Hypocrisy set upon them by a loose Generation which they live among.* If men discover the falshood of their hearts by any evil acts of theirs, and they be such as do manifestly declare them to be false, and we censure them accordingly for it, we do then judge of the tree by its fruits, and it is a right judgment, according to Mat. 7. 20. *by their fruits ye shall know them*; but if there be no such thing appears, but in all things they carry it regularly, and yet we condemn them, we take Gods work out of his hand, and may be guilty of condemning the Generation of the just.

3. This is also to sin against the Rule
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of Christian Charity. We observed, that *Charity* is the very bond of Christian Communion in this World. Now the proper nature of Charity is to *think the best* of others, so far as we may have any encouragement so to do; surely then, when we see men to be zealous for the Ordinances of Christ, and careful in doing according to his commands therein, and therein shewing a respect to all his Precepts; this bespeaks in our Consciences that they do well: and unless we have reason from their other conversation among men, to condemn them, we ought to judge them sincere; nor are the common infirmities incident to the Children of God in this life, to weaken our Charity on this account. If we are mistaken in this, it will do us no hurt, and *to their own master they must stand or fall*; but if we wrong them in our censures of them, we bring guilt upon our selves, and provoke Gods just displeasure against us.

3. Have a care that you do not take up with, and rest in a form of Godliness; and it concerns us all to take great heed to our selves on this account, and that upon these three considerations.

1. There is great danger of it. It is a thing which sinful man is in great hazard of, as will be evident, if we consider;

1. The natural deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart; we are told, Jer. 17. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* Now the wickedness which is in the heart naturally, inclineth us to all manner of sin, and is continually prompting of us that way, Gen. 8. 21. *the imagination of mans heart is evil from his youth.* So that it will do its utmost to keep out every thing that is truly good; and if we add to this the guile which it is full of, and the innumerable cunning tricks that it hath to impose upon men by, yea, upon the man himself, we may be convinced that we have great reason to be afraid of being trappanned by it. It is certain, that true Godliness is a thing contrary to the resentments of the corrupt heart in us; if therefore it can but reach to the sinister ends upon which unregenerate men do engage in the profession of Religion, and yet keep sin upon the throne within, it will certainly do it; and

and it will encourage the man to go through all the formalities of it too, with the greatest shew that can be; and if you trust to it you will beyond question be imposed on, and never go beyond a form: hence we have that advice, Prov. 28. 26. *He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool.*

2. These declining times afford great Temptations to it. It is an hour of great trial upon this account; it is a day wherein men generally content themselves with a form of Godliness, and count that to be sufficient, yea, there are a great many who esteem that too much. Observe the frame of many Professors, and it looks as if they were afraid of having too much of Religion; as if heart piety were a needless thing; as if it were not a credit, but rather a reproach to a man to be sincerely Godly. If you will do as the most do, a form will be enough for you; if you will go farther, and resolve to live up to the *Rules* of the Gospel, and lead a *Conversation* in all things *worthy of Christ*, and carefully *avoid the appearances of evil*, you must expect to meet with scorn, and reproach,

and *cruel mockings* ; you will hereby practically condemn the Generation you live in, if you will now *build an Ark*, they will malign you for it, and you must look to have it cast in your dish, as a matter of ignominy. If now you will consult with flesh and blood, and hearken to carnal reasonings, they will bid you to be content to do as others do, and tell you that you shall fare as well as they ; and that it is pride in you to think your selves wiser than your neighbours, or suppose that none shall obtain heaven and happiness, but such scrupulous persons as you are. Certainly then you ly open to no small hazard.

2. There is great danger in it, if you are thus imposed on, it will certainly expose you, and you will sooner or later find it to your sorrow ; for consider :

1. You cannot impose upon God. You have not only to deal with men in this matter, but with the heart searching God : now God requires your hearts in all your duties, as well as the careful observance of the duties themselves ; they are put together, Prov. 23. 26. *My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways ;*

Times Displayed. 151

ways; we are told, Psal. 51. 6. *that God requireth truth in the inward parts.* When you go about any Service, God doth not only see what formality you use, but he enquires where your hearts are; those Jews were as fair and plausible in their carriage as could be, but God made that observation upon them, Ezek. 33. 31. *Their heart is gone after their covetousness*; and you cannot, by all your curious and cunning contrivances, deceive him: all your covers and pretences hide not from him, Psal. 139. 12. *the darkness hideth not from thee*: We are therefor warned on this account, Gal. 6. 7. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* God remarks, not only what men do right, but whether they do it with a perfect heart; such a note is made upon him, 2 Chron. 25. 2. *He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.*

2. You will therefore perish for all this. All the formality which you can possibly use in your profession, will not save you from destruction, if you rest in that; you may take all manner of pains in it, be very curious and exact in the performance of the duties of Worship

G 4

toward

The Peril of the
 toward God, and of righteousness to-
 wards men; you may pray, read, con-
 fer, be diligent in your Calling, honest
 in your Commerce, charitable in your
 distributions, & yet loose all your works,
 and be your selves *numbred with the work-
 ers of iniquity*, and doomed to *depart with
 them*, Luk. 13. 26, 27. when God comes
 to reward all men according as their
 works have been, he will not recompence
 you according to your *formality*, but ac-
 cording to your *hypocrisy*, and that will be
 a fearful thing: God threatens them that
*come to enquire of him, and set up their idols
 in their heart, that he will answer them ac-
 cording to their Idols*, Ezek. 14. 4.

3. Nay, there will be less hope of you
 than of others: Your Salvation will here-
 by be rendred far the more desperate of
 all the men in the world, there is none
 in more fearful danger of unavoidable
 perdition, than such an one as hath taken
 up with, and sheltered himself under a
 form of Godliness, without the power of
 it. There is more hope of a profane and
 prodigal sinner, who hath allowed him-
 self in the greatest neglects of duty, and
 excesses of immorality, than of him. It

is a fearful word of Christ to the formalists of that time when he was conversant among men, Mat. 21. 31. *Verily, I say unto you, that the Publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

We can easier reach the consciences of such, which will more readily accuse them of the enormities which we apply the awful threatnings of the Word of God unto, and say unto them, *thou art the man.* Whereas these are secure, and confident in their good estate, and can put away all awakenings, and warnings, and counsels from them, as things that they are not at all concerned with; and can sleep in a whole skin, under all the rousing truths that are spoken to them in the Ministry. If once you arrive hither, you are *settled on your lees*, and little hope is left of your being converted and saved; beware then of this frame, lest you rue it for ever.

4. You will be guilty of making the times perilous. Our *Text* tells us that this is one, and a principal cause of their being so. *God is a God of Judgment*, and he will bear witness against this wickedness, as well as any other; and the more
G 5 there

there are of such persons, the more do such a people ly exposed. When Gods Judgments come upon the Land, there are none that have more reason to look upon themselves as the procurers of them, than such as you are. When you look upon all the evils that overtake a sinful people, you ought to acknowledge that it is *for your sakes that the land mourns*: You are very forward to charge Drunkards, Whoremasters, Swearers, and Mockers at Religion, for being the *troublers of Israel*, but know and be assured, that you have as deep an hand in the provocation as any of them; and God hath threatned that he will *punish the uncircumcised in heart, as well as the uncircumcised in flesh*, Jer. 9. 25, 26.

5. You lay your selves open to be peculiar monuments of Gods Judgments in such times. Not only are you to expect the common calamities of the times, but also to have some peculiar brand set upon you in such a day. I do not say, that God always doth so by men in this world; for some mens sins go before hand to Judgment, and others follow after; and God doth arbitrarily on this account:
but

but that you do give him special provocation thus to deal with you, and that it will be a righteous thing with him so to do. And, though it is not for us rashly to judge of others, by the providences which pass over them; but to be very sober in our censures of men, when they are strangely visited; yet men have reason to call themselves to a strict account, when Gods hand so lieth upon them: and how often may they be able to lay their finger on this sore.

3. The thing it self is unreasonable. Of all the men in the world, the formalist acts the most irrationally, and contrary to the very sentiments of common reason: and if you would but ponder on the matter according to the *Principles of the light of nature*, it would afford you sufficient conviction of your egregious folly: either the Religion which you thus formally profess, is worthy of your cordial embracing of, or it is not; if it be not, why then do you take up so much as a form of it? if it be, why then no more but a form? *Out of your own mouth* you will be one day judged in this matter. If Godliness be the way to eternal life, it requires

requires your cordial & sincere profession of it; if it have nothing of saving good in it, nor will profit you for happiness, why will you, by a formality, hinder your selves of that which you think will do you good? The lewd sinner, who pretends to nothing more, but to seek his happiness in this life, and expects it from the fruition of the World, and thereupon giveth scope to himself, to take all the carnal satisfactions in it, which he can extract out of it, acts more according to *Principles* than you. He that cannot give a good reason why he should be through and upright in the practice of Holiness, cannot give one why he should take up a form of it. And if you conceive an excellency in the form, reason should tell you how much more excellent the power of it must be: let me then say as he, *1 King. 18. 21. How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God follow him, but if Baal, then follow him.*

2. To those that are truly Godly: be you Exhorted to preserve the power of Godliness in times wherein there is little of it to be found. And to move you hereto, Consider;

1. The Glory of God is now peculiarly concerned in your so doing. When there are but a few that seek his honour, it is a special call to all such as are truly Godly, to stand up and appear for it. Certainly, if you have any spark of real goodness in you, if you prefer the Glory of God above all, and do cordially desire that all men would seek it, it cannot but put you upon being the more careful to your selves about it. When the Lord Jesus Christ hath but a few Friends in the world, and there are so many that dishonour him, they that are indeed his friends, are loudly called upon the more eminently to appear so; and you cannot otherwise shew your selves true and faithful to him. When there were a great many pretended Disciples that deserted Christ, and walked no more with him, he put that close question to the twelve, *Job. 6. 67. Will ye also go away?* When the Ten Tribes revolted from the true worship of God, and turned aside to Jeroboams Superstition and Idolatry, God gave that admonition to the Kingdom of Judah, *Hos. 4. 15. Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend.* And when the body of that people had turned

turned from God, and made them a *Golden Calf*, and prostrated themselves to that, *Moses* calls aloud to the people, as, *Exod. 32. 26. Who is on the Lords side? let him come unto me.* And we find that the *Tribe of Levi* presently appeared, and they obtained a blessing upon it. Hereby is a special advantage afforded you, to approve your selves sincere, and upright in heart, and to bring much glory to God.

2. Your own comfort, in all changes, will be greatly helped by it. We have observed, that the best must look to meet with trouble, when God cometh to visit a people for these things : nor can they tell how deeply they may personally suffer in such times. However, there is a way by which the people of God may come to have much inward tranquility in their Souls, and be able to commit themselves to God with a sedate Spirit, when the Storms of Judgments are most furious, and *Sinners in Zion are afraid, and fearfulness surpriseth the Hypocrites* : and this is worth our utmost endeavour, and the peace of it will make full amends for all the labour we can use about it. And I am sure that there is nothing that will more largely

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contribute hereto than this, viz. the Testimony of our Consciences to our sincerity, in standing by, and upholding the power of Godliness, in the most degenerate times. This will give rejoycing in the greatest afflictions that can befall us. Paul sets a *Probatum est* upon this, 2 Cor. 1. 12. *Our rejoycing is this, the testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and Godly sincerity, we have had our Conversation in the World.* This will help to fix our hearts in times when the most threatening Symptoms of evil appear, and the Clouds are gathering thick and fast : So it is with him who is upright. *Psal. 112. 7, 8. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord : his heart is established he shall not be afraid.* Whereas the want of this integrity, or some notorious defect in it, touching the Conscience, and making it to reflect upon the man, will offer more inward molestation, and heart disquietment, than all the outward troubles which he can encounter withal.

3. You will meet with great *Temptations*, which will offer to discourage you at such a time. What they are hath been before

before taken notice of ; and let Godly ones who *have the root of the matter in them*, beware of despising this warning, or thinking themselves out of the reach of these Temptations. Godly men have a corrupt part remaining within them, which they do find work enough to suppress at any time, and it will certainly take advantage to urge hard, when it hath motives from without to back it's suggestions withall : nor will all your Confidence secure you against the assaults of it, but it will be too hard for you, if you be not very headful to your selves. You have awful instances of this to give you warning. *Peter* for all his resolution, and repeated purposes, was yet fearfully overcome when the tryal was upon him. *Matth. 26. Barnabas* was drawn into a Scandalous dissimulation, when *Peter* had begun, *Gal. 2. 12.* You had need to be well provided, if you will stem the stream of the times, and hold out against all that would allure you from your fidelity to Christ, when you may be called to part with every thing else, though never so dear to you, if you will preserve your integrity immaculate : and for your help on this account.

I. See

I. See to your hearts that they be right in all that you do in your profession. If God mainly regards the heart, it concerns all that would approve themselves to him, to do so too. If you can once get them to be right, your main business is done, and till you have made this sure, you cannot do any thing well. See then to your through Conversion; that indeed is not all that you have to do, but it is the first thing, because there can nothing be done right without it. It is impossible that an unconverted heart, should be a sincere heart in Gods account and acceptance; till you have gotten a new heart, you can never go beyond formality in any thing you do; and if you would have such an heart as this, you must go to God for it: It is he alone who can give it to you, and you must ask it of him, *Ezek 36. 26. a new heart will I give you*. You must also call for your heart, every time that you go about any duty, and be sure to take it along with you, if you would be cordial in it; it will be away, if you do not heedfully look after it; and too often doth a Godly man perform this and that Service in formality, because of his inadvertency in this regard; or because

he trusts his heart too much, which as often as he doth so, deceiveth him; how careful is *David* in this respect? Psal. 57.

8. *Awake my glory, awake psalterj and harp; I my self will awake early.*

2. Set your selves ever in the presence of God, as of one who seeth and hateth Hypocrisy. We are indeed forbidden to do *eye-service* to men, as of a thing which proceeds from a false heart; but eye-service to God is every where approved; and there is nothing that can be a more powerful and awful consideration on our minds, to make us afraid of doing any thing in hypocrisy, than to think of those two things, and always carry the deep impression of them upon our hearts, viz. that God stands by, and looks on, and that he cannot abide dissimulation; for he is our Law giver, and our Judge, who will call us to an account, and he will judge righteous Judgment, and cannot be mistaken in it. Hence holy men on Scripture Record, have always been wary of this, when they were in a right frame, and made use of it as a caution to excite them to sincerity; thus did *Job*, Chap. 31. 4. *Doth not he see my ways, and count all my*

my steps; and *David* saith, *Psal. 16. 8 I have set the Lord always before me.* It is therefore the character of wicked men, that they think not of God, *Psal. 10. 4. God is not in all his thoughts*; and they suppose him to be unconcerned about the affairs of the children of men, and so not to be feared, *Ezek. 8. 12. They say, the Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the Earth.*

3. Maintain and strengthen your love to God, and his ways. See that you have this principle in you: where this love is not, the best that you do will be but formality; and you had need to be always nourishing this principle in you, and getting of it corroborated: you will meet with many things that will offer to damp it. If you can but attain to do every thing in true love to God, delighting in his ways, and desiring his glory above all things, this will be the best help to do all things uprightly; this will make you see to the matter, and manner, and principle, and end, that all be accommodated to Evangelical directions and designs; and according to the strength and activity of this love in you, such will be the power of Godliness.

Godliness appearing in your lives. If the Law of God have that vertue and sweetness with you, thar it had with *David*, who could say, *Psal. 19. 10. More to be desired than gold, than much refined gold, sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb*; this will cause you to lay your selves out to the utmost for him, and that will be very acceptable to him.

4. Labour to experience Communion with God in your serving of him; there is a Communion which Godly men have with God in this life; he could say, *1 Job. 1. 3. Truly our fellowship is with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*; this is it which a sincere Christian hath an aim at in all that he doth, and there is nothing that can content him without it: Now this Communion is to be had in the way of duty. If you can do duty contentedly without the enjoyment of it, & if this be your constant guise, you are Hypocrites; but if you restlessly seek it, and he affords it you, make much of it, prize it above every thing in the world, endeavour to be able to say of it as he, *Psal 84. 10. A day in thy Court is better than a thousand*; and this will certainly

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If you put you upon longing for more of it, and make you to say, as Plal. 63. 1, 2. *My soul thirsteth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen;* and there is nothing can carry out your hearts more intently after the expressing sincerity in your Services, than the value you have for this, and the fresh apprehension, of the delight which you have found in it.

5. Despise all the contempt and reproach of carnal and formal men. You must expect to meet with enough of it from men of such a spirit, if you will go one step before them in the ways of Godliness; and if you are so nice and delicate, as not to be able to bear the blast of them, you will be put upon it to play the Hypocrite many a time, and can by no means avoid it: You must live among them, and have some unavoidable conversation with them; and they cannot forbear: you must therefore endeavour to imitate your Lord Christ, of whom it is said, Heb. 12. 2. *That he endured the Cross, and despised the shame;* and remember what Christ hath warned you on this account, Mark 8. 38. *Who so ever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this*

this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels.

6. Seek to, and depend upon Christ to preserve you in your integrity; and there is besides the keeping of Grace alive in you, which is an effect of his power, the upholding of the lively efficacy of it in exercise to be sought of him; else you may fall under those decays, which will grievously wound you, and bring sorrow upon you; this was the Psalmists request unto God, Psal. 25. 21. *let integrity and uprightness preserve me*; and he acknowledgeth that he had a gracious answer of this prayer, Psal. 41. 12. *as for me, thou upholdest mine integrity.* Be therefore ever jealous of your selves, sensible of your own insufficiency, and renounce trust in your own grace, and let that keep you in an humble dependance upon Christ.

7. Pray to God to revive dying Religion. Truly you cannot keep up the power of Godliness in your selves without this; your hearts cannot but be affected with the present state of Christianity;

stianity ; and it is God only who can, and he can revive it in the midst of the days ; and if you either love the glory of God, or seek the weal of Zion, you cannot be silent ; see for this, Isa. 62. 1, 6, 7. For Zions sake, I will not hold my peace, &c. ye that make mention of God keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth ; pray that he will pour out his spirit upon the dry places, and turn the wilderness into a fruitful field ; and thus shall you prove your selves to be Israelites indeed.

8. Keep upon your thoughts an expectation of the hastening account that you shall be called unto. If Ungodly Sinners, who please themselves with their outside pretences, did really believe and meditate more upon this, how would it help to awaken them ? and if the Children of God would be more conversant with, and realizing of this day to themselves, it would put them upon the more solemn preparation for it ; and if we could be always helped

168 *The Peril of the Times, &c.*
helped to do every thing that we engage
in, with such a respect and caution, that
it will shortly be called over before An-
gels and men, and that not only the
action it self, but the spirit with which
it was done, how would it be a continual
guard against empty formality, and put
us upon endeavours to express the
power of Godliness in all things; and
it would make us to answer every temp-
tation that would draw us away from
our sincerity, with his reflection, Job 31.
14. *What then shall I do, when God riseth
up? and when he visiteth, what shall I an-
swer him?*

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